GRASSROOTS JOURNALS
ISSN 2564-212X
05(02) | December 2025

JOURNAL OF POLICY & GOVERNANCE
Published by The Grassroots Institute, Canada
Website: http://grassrootsjournals.org/jpg

M – 00596 | Analytical Article

From Dust We Came and from Dust We Shall Return: Settler Scholar Positionality, Equity and Collaborative Commitment in Higher Education Reform

Dan Frederick Orcherton
Professor and Founding Dean, School of Environment and Climate Change, The University of Natural Resources and Environment, East New Britain, Papua New Guinea. Email: orchertonandsudario@gmail.com | ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0859-2592

ABSTRACT

This essay interrogates settler scholar positionality in relation to equity and collaborative commitment within higher education reform, arguing that meaningful decolonization requires reflexive, ethically grounded partnerships with Indigenous communities. Drawing on frameworks such as Two-Eyed Seeing, Movement-based Participatory Action Research, and transformative leadership, the paper situates settler scholars within colonial legacies that shape knowledge production, curriculum, governance, and climate justice narratives. It explores how entrenched power dynamics and systemic barriers—manifested in curricula, institutional policy, and philanthropic reconciliation discourses — undermine Indigenous epistemologies and perpetuate exclusion unless actively addressed. Through case studies and theoretical synthesis, the work articulates models for equitable engagement, including the institutionalization of Indigenous Knowledge Holders Councils, co-created research agendas, and culturally responsive pedagogy. The analysis emphasizes the necessity of accountability, sustained reflexivity, and ethical research practices that center Indigenous agency, data sovereignty, and shared governance. Challenges in forming genuine partnerships are examined, including historical distrust, divergent epistemic expectations, and institutional inertia, along with strategies to overcome them. The essay concludes with a call to action for settler scholars: to move beyond performative allyship toward sustained structural change by embedding Indigenous methodologies, supporting Indigenous leadership, and co-developing knowledge systems that advance equity, resilience, and reconciliation (John et al., 2024).

Keywords: Settler scholarpPositionality; Decolonizing higher education; Indigenous–Settler partnerships; Two-eyed seeing; Indigenous knowledge systems; Ethical and reflexive research practice; Shared governance and data sovereignty

Received: 20 August 2025
Reviewed: 18 October 2025
Accepted: 30 October 2025
Published: 18 December 2025

Executive Chief Editor
Dr. Hasrat Arjjumend
Associate Editors
Dr. Mohanasundari Thangavel
Dr. Ansari P. A.
Ms. Nusrat Yaqoob

How to cite this paper: Orcherton, D. F. (2025). *From Dust We Came and from Dust We Shall Return*: Settler Scholar Positionality, Equity and Collaborative Commitment in Higher Education Reform. *Journal of Policy & Governance*, *05*(02), 21-56. https://doi.org/10.33002/jpg050202

Copyright © 2025 by author(s). This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Open Access

1. INTRODUCTION

An analysis of *settler scholar positionality* requires a critical examination of how personal and institutional identities influence equity, collaboration, and reform in education. This essay - *From Dust We Came and from Dust We Shall Return*[1] - addresses a persistent gap in the scholarship on reconciliation and decolonization in higher education — specifically, the lack of critical engagement with *how settler scholars understand, navigate, and operationalize their positionality* within institutional frameworks shaped by colonial histories. While many studies have emphasized the need for Indigenizing curricula and governance, fewer have interrogated the internal dynamics of power, privilege, and self-reflection that shape the relationships between settler and Indigenous educators. This gap limits our understanding of how authentic, equitable collaboration can occur in the shared work of decolonizing education (Bennett et al., 2022).

This study also responds to a broader gap in applied educational reform research: the disconnect between policy-level commitments to reconciliation and the lived practices that enact those commitments. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has explicitly called upon post-secondary institutions to integrate Indigenous knowledge systems, methodologies, and worldviews across disciplines. In particular, Call to Action #62 highlights the need to reshape curricula that have historically prioritized Western epistemologies, thereby reproducing systemic inequities and epistemic marginalization (McCagg-Nystrom, 2024). Yet, while institutional strategies often reference the TRC, there remains insufficient empirical and theoretical exploration of *how these commitments translate into practice* through the leadership, teaching, and research roles of settler academics.

Operationalizing reconciliation within academic institutions requires tangible mechanisms for change. Initiatives such as the establishment of *Indigenous Knowledge Holders Councils* illustrate one such mechanism, as they embed Indigenous perspectives directly within governance and decision-making processes. These initiatives go beyond symbolic inclusion; they embody a transformative approach to institutional culture that seeks to elevate Indigenous epistemologies to equal footing with Western knowledge traditions (Fisk et al., 2024). The integration of these structures demonstrates how institutions can move from representation to empowerment, promoting environments where Indigenous students, faculty, and staff can thrive. However, the gap remains in understanding how settler scholars position themselves in relation to these transformative shifts — whether as allies, collaborators, or passive participants in systemic change. This paper, therefore, explores how positional awareness and critical self-reflection can deepen institutional commitments to equity and reconciliation (Daly, 2024; Avramovic, 2024).

Furthermore, the intersection of collaborative practices between Indigenous and settler educators highlights another underexplored dimension: how relational, cross-cultural pedagogies contribute to dismantling systemic racism entrenched in educational systems. For instance, collaborative models involving Indigenous community nurses and settler nurse educators reveal the practical value of *Two-Eyed Seeing*, which draws from both Indigenous and Western frameworks to enhance teaching and learning (Archer, 2024). These examples demonstrate how co-created pedagogical spaces can challenge entrenched hierarchies of knowledge and facilitate culturally safe, inclusive learning environments. Yet, there remains a critical need to theorize how such collaborations can be scaled and sustained within broader institutional structures.

In addressing these interrelated gaps — the limited interrogation of settler scholar positionality, the disjunction between policy and practice in reconciliation efforts, and the need for sustained models of collaborative pedagogy — this paper contributes to ongoing discourses on decolonization in higher education. It argues that genuine progress toward reconciliation requires not only institutional change but also the transformation of individual scholarly identities. By critically engaging with their positionality, settler scholars can move beyond performative allyship toward meaningful participation in collective, Indigenous-led educational reform.

[1] It originates from the Bible, specifically Genesis 3:19, where God tells Adam that he was created from dust and will eventually return to dust. This phrase is often used during funerals and on Ash Wednesday to remind people of their earthly origins and eventual return to the ground.

2. DEFINITION OF SETTLER SCHOLAR POSITIONALITY

As mentioned, settler scholar positionality requires a critical examination of one's location within broader historical, cultural, and socio-political frameworks. Settler scholars often navigate a complex landscape marked by colonial histories that privilege their positionality while simultaneously shaping the experiences of Indigenous populations. This duality compels a reflective practice in which scholars are urged to interrogate how their identities and academic pursuits intersect with ongoing colonial legacies. By recognizing the power differentials at play, settler scholars can evaluate their contributions to knowledge production within academia, especially when addressing topics of equity and inclusion. As scholars engage in this reflective exercise, they need to consciously dismantle the barriers that perpetuate systemic inequities and strive for more collaborative and equitable research practices, as highlighted through initiatives that aim to address historical injustices (Antifaeff, 2024; Mad Plum et al., 2024).

From a methodological standpoint, defining settler scholar positionality is not merely a theoretical act — it shapes how researchers design, conduct, and interpret their studies. Reflexivity becomes a methodological tool that compels scholars to examine their underlying assumptions, power relations, and modes of engagement with Indigenous and marginalized communities. This recognition invites the integration of decolonizing and participatory research approaches, such as Talanoa, Kaupapa Māori, or community-based participatory methods, which prioritize relational accountability and collective knowledge production. In this way, the articulation of settler scholar positionality directly influences methodological stance by embedding ethical responsibility, respect for Indigenous epistemologies, and recognition of multiple worldviews into every stage of research (Johnson & Endres, 2021; Viswanathan et al., 2004).

Moreover, settler scholar positionality encompasses obligations to not only acknowledge but actively combat the systemic racism ingrained in academic institutions. This recognition necessitates transformative leadership within scholarly frameworks, fostering a commitment to inclusivity and diversity in research. For instance, institutions such as Big River College demonstrate a proactive response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action by integrating Indigenous knowledge systems into their governance structures (McCagg-Nystrom, 2024). By establishing councils like the Indigenous Knowledge Holders Council, stakeholders gain insights into the complexities of Indigenous experiences. Consequently, settler scholars must leverage such initiatives as blueprints for establishing equitable platforms that involve Indigenous perspectives. This institutional alignment also reinforces how positionality guides methodological integrity — encouraging the co-creation of research agendas and interpretive frameworks that reflect Indigenous priorities and relational ethics rather than external imposition.

The ongoing discourse surrounding equity in academia directly links settler scholars' positionality with their responsibility to advocate for and institute meaningful change through collaborative commitments and practices reflective of Indigenous priorities (Wrigley, 2024). Finally, the impact of settler scholar positionality extends into climate justice discussions, where scholars must grapple with their roles amidst the pressing challenges posed by climate change, particularly in colonized contexts. Research initiatives have indicated that climate justice efforts often mirror existing racial, gender, and class inequalities, complicating the narratives surrounding community resilience and advocacy (Wrigley, 2024). As settler scholars engage with these dynamics, they must reflect on how their academic frameworks either contribute to or disrupt the status quo of privilege and exclusion. This critical engagement not only fosters a deeper understanding of the intricate relationships between social justice and environmental issues but also creates pathways for coalition-building among diverse stakeholders.

Ultimately, the responsibilities inherent in settler scholar positionality compel researchers to align their work with the broader goals of equity, social justice, and cultural accountability in a rapidly changing global landscape (Mad Plume et al., 2024). By integrating this positional awareness into their methodological framework, scholars transform positionality from a descriptive label into an active, guiding principle that informs ethical decision-making, interpretation, and knowledge dissemination. As such, settler scholar positionality serves as both a conceptual and methodological foundation for research committed to decolonial transformation and relational accountability.

2.1 The Layered Touchtone for Settler Scholars

The title "*From dust we came and from dust we shall return*" (Genesis 3:19) serves as a rich and layered touchstone for settler scholars, but its meaning depends on how it is taken up. The "dust" metaphor operates not only as a creative and interdisciplinary image but also as an analytical framework through which to examine cycles of materiality, temporality, and accountability in human–land relations. As a conceptual lens, "From Dust to Dust" invites reflection on the ontological and ethical dimensions of belonging, mortality, and regeneration. It encourages scholars to interrogate how colonial, ecological, and spiritual narratives intertwine in shaping our understanding of origin and return — of becoming and unbecoming within the same ground that sustains us.

2.2 Humility and Shared Origin, not Innocence

The biblical reminder of mortality and material commonality can ground settler scholars in humility. Recognizing that all humans and the land are of the same "dust" challenges grand narratives of ownership, mastery, and separation. Eco-theological critique — especially the move beyond a triumphalist "dominion" reading of Genesis toward relational stewardship — frames humans as caretakers embedded in ecosystems, not sovereign extractors (Orr, 2017; "Beyond Stewardship" literature). That shared origin can open ethical space for listening, reciprocity, and care rather than asserting entitlement.

2.3 Caveat

This universality can also be co-opted as a *settler move toward innocence* — e.g., *"we're all dust, so historical injustices are smoothed over."* Tuck and Yang (2012) warn against such metaphors that let settlers neutralize accountability by flattening differences; decolonization, they stress, is about the *return of land and life*, not abstract mutual vulnerability. So, the "dust" motif should not become a rhetorical absolution that erases the specific histories of dispossession and ongoing structural inequities settler scholars are implicated in.

2.4 Responsibility and Reciprocity

If "dust" is what connects us materially to place, then settler scholars' work is not simply intellectual but ecological and relational. The phrase can be read as a covenantal prompt: since our being is sourced in the land and will return to it, our engagements — especially as outsiders on colonized territory — must aim to restore soil, relationships, and knowledge systems, not further degrade or appropriate them. Indigenous frameworks emphasize *responsibility to land* rather than ownership, and settler scholars can align with that by centering Indigenous knowledge, supporting land-back movements, and co-creating research that acknowledges data/knowledge sovereignty.

2.5 Temporal Perspective and Accountability

Mortality ("to dust you shall return") reminds scholars that their influence is finite; structural change requires commitments beyond individual careers. Settler scholars, therefore, should orient their positionality toward sustained institutional transformation — embedding Indigenous governance, shared agenda-setting, and reparative practices — rather than performative, short-lived "allyship." Reflexivity about one's own legacy is deepened: the dust to which one returns includes the consequences of one's work.

In essence then, the Genesis phrase can be a generative metaphor for settler scholars if held with nuance: as a call to humility (recognizing shared materiality), as a rejection of innocence (not using universality to evade responsibility), and as an ethical anchor toward long-term, reciprocal, and decolonizing engagement. Grounded in eco-theology's reframing of human-land relations and informed by decolonial critique (e.g., Tuck & Yang, 2012), it helps situate settler scholarship not as stewardship-in-name only, but as ethically accountable co-joining with Indigenous-led lifeways and knowledge systems (Orr, 2017).

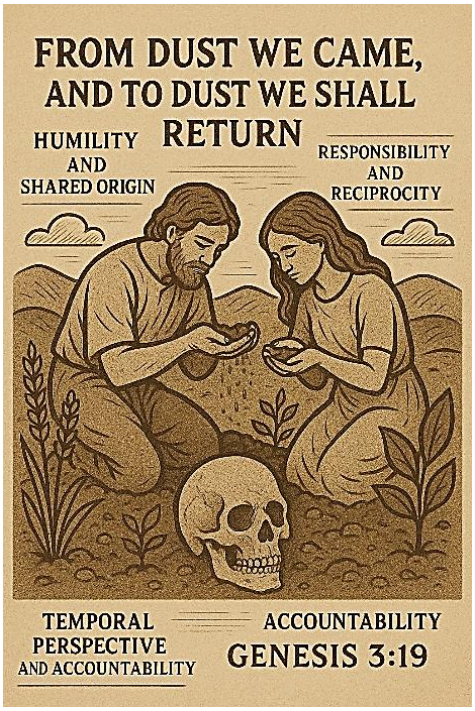

Figure 1: "From Dust to Dust: Humility, Responsibility, and the Covenant of Return" captures the Genesis 3:19 reference, "Our eco-theological lens, and the three principles — humility/shared origin, responsibility/reciprocity, and temporal accountability (*Source*: OpenAI (2025a). Note: AI-generated illustration; all people and buildings depicted are fictitious.

3. IMPORTANCE OF EQUITY IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

Equity in academic discourse serves as a foundational pillar in dismantling entrenched structures of inequality, particularly within the context of settler scholar positionality (Bennet et al., 2022). It necessitates a critical examination of the implicit biases that persist within scholarly environments, often sidelining marginalized voices and perpetuating power imbalances. By fostering an equitable framework, higher education and college scholars not only promote inclusivity but also facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of sociocultural phenomena. For instance, the notion of Midwest Nice, while seemingly benign, encapsulates a complex interplay of Whiteness that can hinder anti-racist dialogues and inhibit meaningful inquiry (Homan, 2025). Consequently, addressing equity in academic discourse becomes imperative not merely as a normative ideal but as a transformative tool for social justice and scholarly integrity, compelling researchers to actively engage in praxis that prioritizes underrepresented perspectives. Furthermore, the practice of engaged scholarship (Molla, 2024), underscores the necessity of equity in academic discourse by facilitating collaboration among diverse stakeholders. This approach not only enriches academic inquiry but also positions scholars as agents of social change. Engaged scholarship promotes collective narratives, enabling a multiplicity of voices to inform discourse, particularly in areas traditionally dominated by authoritative perspectives (Molla, 2024). However, scholars frequently confront discontents such as narrow definitions of what constitutes knowledge, potentially stymying genuine engagement. Recognizing these challenges, it becomes crucial to cultivate ecosystems supportive of equity that empower researchers to navigate a complex landscape of public engagement. Such ecosystems would encourage the adoption of methodologies that embrace diverse epistemologies, thus reinforcing the moral imperative to mobilize academic research toward tangible social outcomes (Islam, 2025). In tandem with engaged scholarship, community-based participatory research (Viswanathan et al., 2004), exemplifies the integral role equity plays in amplifying marginalized voices within academic discourse. Initiatives like the *¿Dónde Vive la Ciencia en su Comunidad?* Translated in English "*Where does science live in your community?"* project illuminate how collaborative methodologies, such as photovoice, can foster critical dialogue around pressing social

justice issues (Comunidad, 2024). Through this lens, community researchers not only engage with their environments but also interrogate the dual nature of STEM as a tool for both control and empowerment (Andress et al., 2020; Symons and Blannin, 2019). This approach foregrounds the importance of maintaining dignity and respect for local knowledge systems, thereby challenging dominant narratives that often overlook the lived experiences of marginalized populations. By advocating for inclusive practices, scholars can contribute to the reclamation of political power and cultural identity, thereby enhancing the overall quality of scholarship and advocating for justice-oriented change (Tebeje, 2025; Balasco, 2024).

3.1 Overview of Collaborative Commitment in Research

In the realm of collaborative research, commitment emerges as a crucial factor underlying equitable partnerships between settlers and Indigenous communities. This collaborative commitment goes beyond mere participation; it necessitates a re-examination of positionality and power dynamics that have historically marginalized Indigenous voices. As highlighted in contemporary literature, such as (Wrigley, 2024), the complexities of climate justice elucidate the necessity for engaged activism that privileges local knowledge and community-led solutions. Achieving a truly collaborative framework involves acknowledging the impediments posed by colonial legacies and institutional structures that perpetuate inequality. Therefore, fostering authentic collaborative efforts requires researchers to engage in continuous self-reflection, recognizing their roles as both knowledge producers and potential barriers to equity. By dismantling traditional hierarchical models of research, scholars can better empower Indigenous communities to shape their narratives, thereby bridging gaps in social, cultural, and environmental justice. The commitment to collaborative research must also integrate principles of decolonization and respect for Indigenous methodologies, creating a foundation for equitable partnerships. Through frameworks like Movement-based Participatory Action Research (PAR), as discussed in Morales (2016) and Wrigley (2024), researchers can advocate for practices that promote collective agency and contribute to the resilience of marginalized communities. This approach emphasizes co-creation of knowledge, allowing Indigenous communities to articulate their unique challenges while fostering an environment conducive to transformative social change. Additionally, the impact of school engagement in nurturing belonging, as articulated in, serves as a parallel for how equitable involvement can enhance collaborative research outcomes (Umamageswari and Bagyalakshmi, 2023). By establishing a symbiotic relationship between researchers and Indigenous participants, studies can genuinely reflect the lived experiences and aspirations of communities, ultimately leading to more sustainable and culturally relevant solutions (Datta, 2013). Finally, the evaluation of collaborative commitments must extend to the analysis of structural frameworks that govern research environments. The systemic examination of policies through an anti-racist and equity lens, as explored in (Antifaeff, 2024), underscores the importance of dismantling barriers that inhibit meaningful collaboration. Moreover, integrating Indigenous perspectives into research agendas, as seen with the initiatives in (Mad Plume, 2024), not only legitimizes Indigenous knowledge systems but also enriches the overall research landscape. This double-pronged approach embodies a commitment to equity that transcends superficial engagement, demanding accountability and active participation from settler scholars. Ultimately, fostering collaborative commitment entails a profound acknowledgment of both the ethical implications of research practices and the imperative to engage in ongoing dialogue and mutual learning. This commitment not only serves as a catalyst for social change but also positions collaborative research as a key mechanism for addressing historical injustices and promoting inclusive growth.

3.2 Historical Context of Settler Scholarship

The historical context of settler scholarship reveals a complex tapestry interwoven with colonial and post-colonial narratives that often perpetuate inequities within educational frameworks (Pewewardy and Lees, 2022). Central to this analysis is the acknowledgment of the longstanding impact of colonialism, particularly as it pertains to Indigenous populations whose histories and contributions have been marginalized. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, specifically #62, calls for a transformative shift in post-secondary education by incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), philosophies, and pedagogies (McCagg-Nystrom, 2024). This incorporation is critical in dismantling the

hegemonic structures that have defined academic discourse, allowing for an enriched understanding of Indigenous worldviews. The emphasis on fostering allyship among educators, particularly settler scholars, necessitates a focused commitment to authentic relationships with Indigenous communities, reinforcing the premise that equitable education can only arise from genuine collaboration and recognition of diverse epistemologies (Figure 2).

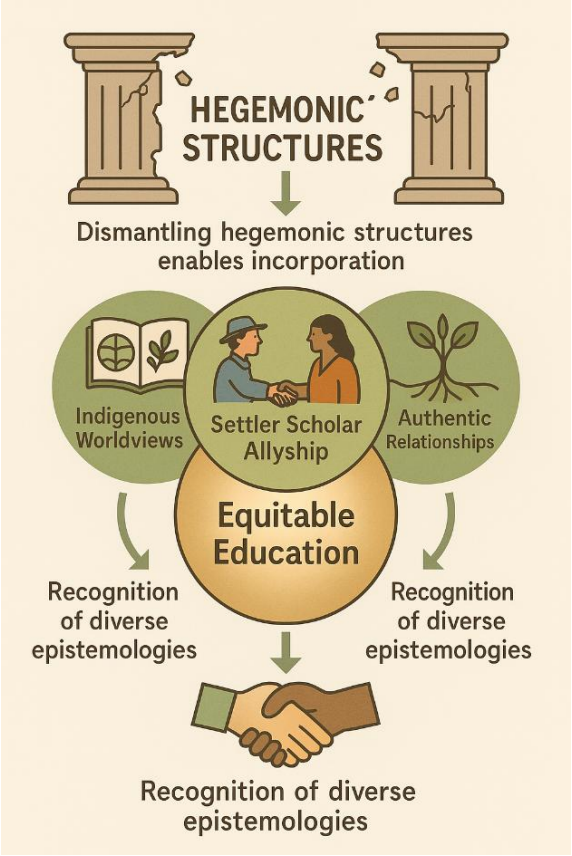

Figure 2: Dismantling hegemonic structures enables the incorporation of Indigenous worldviews, settler scholar allyship, and authentic relationships, converging to produce equitable education grounded in recognition of diverse epistemologies (*Source*: OpenAI (2025b). *ChatGPT* (Aug 12 version) [Large language model], https://chat.openai.com/. Note: AI-generated illustration; all people and buildings depicted are fictitious.

Briefly, figure 2 illustrates (at the top) are two cracked classical columns labeled *"Hegemonic Structures",* with fragments falling away - visualizing their breaking down or dismantling. A downward arrow leads to a central Venn-like triad of overlapping circles: "Indigenous Worldviews", "Settler Scholar Allyship", and "Authentic Relationships". Their intersection feeds into a glowing central sphere labeled "Equitable Education". From that sphere a further arrow points down to a handshake icon, reinforcing collaboration. Around the lower part are textual reinforcement arrows reading "Recognition of diverse epistemologies", showing how those epistemologies flow into and support equitable education.

The implications of settler scholarship are not restricted to the realm of curriculum development but extend into broader institutional practices and governance models. For instance, the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Holders Councils within the governance structure of educational institutions, such as demonstrated at Big River College, exemplifies a proactive response to the Calls to Action (McCagg-Nystrom, 2024). Establishing such councils provides critical direction to leadership while ensuring Indigenous perspectives are adequately represented and integrated in academic decision-making processes. This shift towards inclusive governance is framed through theoretical underpinnings that promote a culturally responsive and adaptive educational environment. The commitment to these frameworks is indicative of a larger cultural metamorphosis within educational institutions, aiming to create not only access but a supportive infrastructure that bolsters the success of Indigenous faculty, staff,

and students. In grappling with the historical context of settler scholarship, it becomes evident that the positionality of settler scholars plays a pivotal role in shaping narratives around equity and social justice in education. The need for a reflective practice, wherein educators critically examine their identities and the implications of hegemonic ideologies, fosters an environment conducive to equity-oriented pedagogy. Encouraging pre-service teachers (PSTs) to engage in justice-oriented actions, as outlined in recent educator frameworks, prompts an exploration of self within community contexts. This proactive engagement not only aids in bridging the gap between educators and the communities they serve but also cultivates a consciousness that actively subverts systemic oppression. Fostering a pedagogy that integrates intersectional analyses allows settler scholars to challenge neoliberal legacies (Mannergren et al, 2024; Johnson and Endres, 2021) and advocate for inclusive curricula that resonate with the complexities of both individual and collective experiences, thereby advancing the broader goals of equity and reconciliation in educational settings.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a multi-layered qualitative design that integrates critical discourse analysis, institutional case study synthesis, movement-based participatory action insights, and structured autoethnography (Tarisavi, 2023). The analytical frame is grounded in "Two-Eyed Seeing" (Etuaptmumk) as a guiding interpretive lens — bringing Indigenous and Western knowledge systems into dialogue — and in Movement-based Participatory Action Research (PAR) principles emphasizing co-creative and accountable engagement (Archer, 2024; Reid et al., 2020; Wrigley, 2024). Data were gathered from institutional documents, policy texts, and scholarly literature, as well as field notes and memos generated through participation in committees, collaborative initiatives, and community-led spaces. Movement-based PAR insights emerged from observation, publicly shared community artifacts, and reflective documentation of co-learning processes. The autoethnographic component was systematically developed through a reflective journal, retrospective fieldnotes, and analytic memos tracing tensions, positionality, and evolving understandings.

Analysis followed a structured, multi-step approach aligned with the above frameworks. Critical discourse analysis examined textual features, discursive practices, and broader social contexts to illuminate institutional narratives and silences. Institutional, participatory, and movement-based data were coded thematically using constant comparison, focusing on categories such as accountability, relational ethics, and settler reflexivity. Autoethnographic materials were also analyzed through chronological organization, thematic coding, and iterative interpretation, ensuring personal experience was rigorously connected to institutional and discursive patterns. Insights across all strands were brought into conversation through an integrative analytic matrix informed by Two-Eyed Seeing and PAR principles, producing a coherent and relational interpretation of settler scholar positionality, equity, and collaborative practice.

4.1 Research Design and Analytical Frame

The methodology used was interpretive, iterative, and multi-scalar, enabling both textual and experiential forms of inquiry. Two-Eyed Seeing serves not only as a philosophical framework but also as a methodological commitment: research questions, selection of texts, and engagement with collaborators are guided by an ethos of relational accountability, mutual respect, and contextual responsiveness. Movement-based PAR principles inform data generation through cyclical reflection, action, and dialogue, positioning both researcher and participants as co-learners and co-constructors of meaning.

4.2 Data Gathering and Critical Discourse Analysis

The first phase of data collection involved a critical literature and discourse review of both foundational and contemporary sources relating to decolonial pedagogy, equity frameworks, philanthropic reconciliation narratives, and institutional governance structures. This included:

- A systematic review of academic literature drawn from peer-reviewed journals, policy documents, and institutional reports published between 2018–2024.

- The collection of discourse materials from policy statements, public addresses, and university equity frameworks related to Indigenous engagement and reconciliation.

The analytical process involved critical discourse analysis (CDA) techniques, focusing on the identification of recurring metaphors, language of inclusion/exclusion, and narrative constructions of "reconciliation" and "equity." Using an interpretive coding process, key discursive patterns were mapped to expose continuities of colonial durability and to trace shifts in institutional rhetoric (Barron, 2024; Trimble, 2024).

4.3 Institutional Case Study Synthesis

In the second phase, the study incorporated institutional case studies and exemplars as empirical illustrations. These included:

- Cases of collaborative curriculum design in the sciences and distance learning education.
- Institutional governance shifts integrating Indigenous Knowledge Holders Councils.
- Leadership adaptations within universities and philanthropic organizations promoting Indigenous co-governance models.

Cases were selected purposively based on their relevance to questions of equity, positionality, and transformative institutional practice. Data sources included published institutional reports, policy evaluations, and documented examples of curricular change. Cross-case synthesis was then applied to identify recurring patterns of institutional resistance and innovation, illuminating how power relations are negotiated in practice and how equitable structures have been institutionalized or constrained (Daly, 2024; McCagg-Nystrom, 2024).

4.4 Reflective Autoethnography and Researcher Positionality

The third methodological strand is reflective autoethnography, which situates the researcher's lived experience as a settler scholar within the broader analytical framework. This component was procedurally grounded in three interrelated practices:

1. Reflexive journaling: Ongoing field notes and personal reflections documented during teaching, research collaborations, and institutional engagements in Canada, Oceania, and other regions.
2. Dialogic validation: Regular, informal dialogues and structured conversations with Indigenous collaborators and academic peers to ensure cultural accountability and to check interpretive bias.
3. Ethical reflexivity: Systematic examination of how privilege, power, and institutional roles shape knowledge production, using iterative cycles of reflection and revision (Antifaeff, 2024; Orcherton, 2023a, 2023b; Wrigley, 2024).

Data from journals and dialogues were coded thematically to trace recurring moments of tension, humility, and learning, thus linking individual reflexivity to collective responsibility within the research process.

4.5 Integrative Synthesis and Knowledge Co-creation

Finally, synthesis across the three methodological strands — discourse analysis, institutional case study, and autoethnographic reflection — was achieved through triangulation. This involved systematically cross-referencing discursive patterns with institutional exemplars and reflexive insights to identify convergences and disjuncture's between theory, practice, and lived experience. The synthesis process generated actionable models for equitable engagement that emphasize co-governance, shared research agendas, and culturally responsive pedagogy. This integrative process transforms the methodology from a purely analytical exercise into a praxis of relational accountability, allowing critique and generative possibilities to coexist within a decolonial and equity-driven framework.

5. ORIGINS OF SETTLER COLONIALISM IN ACADEMIA

The conceptual underpinnings of settler colonialism in academia emerge from a complex interplay of historical, ideological, and institutional factors that have perpetuated epistemic dominance. This phenomenon, rooted in colonial practices, is characterized by a systematic erasure of Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and the imposition of Western, Colonialist pr Eurocentric frameworks in educational curricula (Leonardo et al., 2023). The historical context reveals a persistent trend in which academic paradigms prioritize Western methodologies, often relegating Indigenous perspectives to peripheral status. Such academic structures not only undermine the validity of Indigenous knowledge but also reinforce a colonial legacy that mandates the assimilation of marginalized knowledge systems into dominant discourses. As highlighted in recent research, there is a significant need for curricula that genuinely integrate IKS to create a more equitable learning environment that challenges prevailing narratives and fosters an inclusive approach to education (Potocki, 2025). The relevance of these dynamics extends beyond theoretical discussion, necessitating actionable frameworks for decolonization within educational settings. Drawing on the foundational tenets of settler colonial theory (Macoun and Strakosch, 2013), it becomes evident that contemporary academic practices are often complicit in reproducing systems of oppression defined by race, class, and gender. The articulation of frameworks for understanding climate justice, for instance, interrogates how institutional biases manifest within climate narratives and advocacy efforts. Specifically, as seen in the work addressing climate activism (as an example) in Western Australia, the intersections of settler colonialism with racial capitalism exacerbate inequalities, marginalizing Indigenous voices and experiences within discussions about climate solutions (Wrigley, 2024). The implications of such marginalization are profound, as they not only deny authentic representation but also dilute the rich potential of IKS in addressing pressing issues such as environmental sustainability. This reveals a critical need for scholars and institutions to engage in self-reflection regarding their positionality and commitment to equity, particularly in how they facilitate inclusive dialogues around climate justice and community resilience. Addressing the roots of settler colonialism in academia necessitates a call to reexamine collaborative endeavors, especially in the context of joint scholarship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. The collaborative potential, as evidenced by initiatives like the UCLA Freedom School, underscores the urgency of generating emancipatory knowledge that prioritizes equity, social justice, and community empowerment (Pelican et al., 2025). Engaging in critical dialogue about land and housing justice reflects a broader commitment to dismantling colonial legacies ingrained in institutional practices. According to Ananya et al.,(2025) and Maliha (2024), this necessitates rethinking methodologies that promote relational accountability and fostering partnerships that prioritize Indigenous methodologies and epistemologies (Ananya et al., 2025); Maliah, 2024; The examination of academic collaborations within a decolonial framework reveals not only the challenges posed by historical inequities but also the pathways for transformative change (Pelican et al., 2025). In doing so, scholars can cultivate a more inclusive academic landscape that honors the depth and diversity of knowledge systems while actively contributing to social justice and equity within academia and beyond.

5.1 Impact of Historical Narratives On Current Scholarship

The historical narratives that have shaped contemporary scholarship play a significant role in defining settler scholar positionality, particularly within the context of Indigenous studies and anti-racist education. As institutions increasingly confront the embedded nature of systemic racism, it becomes imperative for educators, especially those in predominantly white institutions, to critically examine their own curricular frameworks and pedagogical practices. For instance, the integration of an Indigenist curriculum, as demonstrated through collaborative efforts between Indigenous nurses and white settler teaching teams, illustrates the necessity of partnership in addressing historical imbalances and fostering a more equitable educational environment (Daly, 2024). This collaboration not only serves to challenge the status quo of Eurocentric narratives but also validates Indigenous epistemologies, which are essential for cultivating a more inclusive scholarly discourse. Moreover, scholars' engagement with the complexities of decolonization illuminates the multifaceted nature of educational reform. Through personal explorations of entities such as child-centered and culturally responsive education, there

emerges an understanding that the process of indigenization involves both humility and intellectual rigor (Henry, 2024).

Through autoethnographic methodologies (Tarisayi, 2023), educators can weave together personal narratives with broader socio-political contexts, allowing for a critical interrogation of colonial legacies. This approach underscores the need for placed-based (or localized), community-focused initiatives that dismantle hegemonic narratives while fostering liberatory educational practices (Lukens, 2013). Utilizing frameworks that navigate the intricacies of coloniality not only informs pedagogical choices but also promotes resilience within marginalized communities, facilitating the reclamation of knowledge and agency. In the realm of philanthropy and its relationship to historical narratives, recent scholarly critiques reveal how reconciliation discourses can inadvertently perpetuate colonial structures while simultaneously offering pathways for meaningful engagement. By examining the reconciliation change narratives within the Canadian settler philanthropy context, scholars illuminate the dissonance present in philanthropic practices that often obscure ongoing colonial violence (Trimble, 2024). This critical dialogue necessitates an exploration of alternative frameworks that transcend mere acknowledgment of past injustices, advocating instead for initiatives rooted in processes of reparations and reciprocal relationships. Such discourses challenge both philanthropic actors and scholars to address the complex legacies of coloniality within their frameworks, consequently fostering a more equitable future that honors the voices and experiences of Indigenous communities (Lukens, 2013).

5.2 Case Studies Of Settler Scholars In Various Disciplines

The examination of settler scholars across various disciplines necessitates an appreciation of their *positionality*, an aspect crucial for understanding how their research impacts marginalized communities (Secules et al., 2021). Case studies, such as investigations into the teaching practices of anti-racist educators, offer empirical insights into the complexities faced by settler scholars who endeavor to integrate equitable educational paradigms within systems often resistant to such change. These studies reveal, for instance, how elementary teachers of color navigate standardized curricula while simultaneously advocating for anti-racist and community-responsive pedagogy. By employing methodologies grounded in *Critical Race Theory* (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017), these educators actively disrupt conventional narratives, illustrating how anti-racist frameworks can foster critical consciousness and agency among students in K–12 settings. Their efforts underscore how teaching that resists color-evasive ideologies contributes to more equitable and inclusive learning environments (Pollack, 2024).

Parallel to these findings, settler scholars working in *professional writing disciplines* face similar challenges when embedding social justice principles into their curricula. A dissertation analyzing the integration of *anti-ableist* and *anti-racist pedagogies* within a core professional writing course demonstrates how intersectional frameworks can illuminate the pedagogical process and enhance students' critical thinking and engagement (Danvers, 2019). By revising course materials to disrupt neoliberal legacies, scholars in these fields have shown how inclusive curriculum redesigns can serve as practical interventions against the dehumanization often found in technical communication. This work contributes to a broader discourse emphasizing the necessity of cultivating inclusivity and reflexivity within professional writing programs, thereby advancing both pedagogical practice and community welfare (Gabriel, 2025).

Moreover, the *narrative research* examining the navigation of institutional reward systems by faculty of color provides additional evidence of the structural challenges that settler scholars encounter in higher education. Despite enduring systemic barriers — such as heightened scrutiny of their scholarship, racialized and gendered stereotypes, and institutional undervaluing of community-based research — these scholars demonstrate resilience and commitment to advancing social justice scholarship. The analysis of their experiences reveals the complex negotiations required to assert legitimacy within traditional academic frameworks while remaining accountable to marginalized voices and communities (Vang, 2024). These insights collectively point to the urgent need for institutions to reassess how scholarship is defined and rewarded, expanding recognition to include experiential and relational forms of knowledge that align with social justice objectives.

5.3 Reflexive Commentary

From a reflexive standpoint, engaging with these cases compels me — as a settler scholar — to interrogate my own position within similar structures. Observing how others navigate resistance, adapt pedagogy, and challenge institutional norms invites an awareness of my own complicity in systems that privilege certain forms of knowledge over others. This self-examination reinforces the methodological necessity of *ethical reflexivity*, reminding researchers to remain accountable to the communities their work engages and to align scholarly practices with the broader goal of transformative equity. Through such critical awareness, settler scholars can more consciously enact educational and institutional change that is both relational and just.

5.4. The Role of Positionality in Research

An in-depth examination of *positionality* is imperative in the context of research conducted by settler scholars, particularly regarding the intricate dynamics of power, privilege, and equity. As a settler scholar who has lived and worked across Indigenous and non-Indigenous educational and environmental contexts in Canada and the Pacific, I recognize that my own intersecting identities — shaped by race, class, gender, education, and cultural background — inevitably influence how I perceive, interpret, and engage with the research process. Acknowledging my positionality involves not only identifying these intersections but also critically assessing how they mediate my relationships with communities and shape the knowledge I co-produce. This recognition demands humility and continuous reflexivity: an ongoing awareness that my scholarly perspective, however well-intentioned, is situated within broader colonial and institutional frameworks that carry historical weight and responsibility.

In practice, this self-awareness transforms how research is conceptualized and conducted. By foregrounding positionality, I strive to co-create knowledge rather than extract it, ensuring that research processes are transparent, reciprocal, and community-engaged. In fields such as climate justice and educational equity, these positional dynamics are particularly visible. For example, as noted in prior research, the commitment to reflexivity and accountability helps prevent the replication of colonial hierarchies of truth and representation, encouraging instead the development of ethically grounded, decolonial methodologies that prioritize Indigenous and local voices (Wrigley, 2024). In my own inquiry, this means intentionally designing research frameworks that balance academic rigor with cultural responsiveness and embracing iterative dialogue with knowledge holders rather than assuming objectivity from a distance. This orientation not only mitigates the risks of epistemic dominance but also fosters *non-exploitative partnerships* in collaborative, cross-cultural endeavors.

Considering the implications of settler scholar positionality within educational contexts adds further nuance to the pursuit of equity and belonging. In British Columbia, for instance, the persistent reports of students — particularly those from racialized and Indigenous backgrounds — experiencing a lack of belonging signal the urgent need for decolonizing educational practices (Archer, 2024). For me, this acknowledgement translates into a commitment to interrogate how pedagogical models I engage with either reinforce or challenge those exclusions. By employing a Two-Eyed Seeing approach, I aim to meld Indigenous knowledge systems with Western educational frameworks to craft inclusive narratives and practices that resonate within diverse learning communities. Such engagement makes positionality a practical tool rather than a theoretical stance — it guides curriculum design, dialogue facilitation, and institutional critique toward outcomes that reflect relational accountability and shared authority. This collaborative orientation addresses historical injustices while expanding the collective understanding of identity, belonging, and equity in educational spaces (Jeung et al., 2018).

Finally, interrogating positionality also exposes the systemic inequities embedded in public institutions beyond the classroom. For example, in an educational district grappling with systemic racism, the absence of anti-racist human resources policies perpetuates discrimination and obstructs the advancement of diversity and equity (Antifaeff, 2024). From my standpoint as both an academic observer and participant in institutional processes, acknowledging positionality sharpens my capacity to analyze such inequities through critical theory and transformative leadership frameworks. This perspective reinforces that genuine institutional change requires confronting one's own embeddedness within the systems being critiqued. Addressing these "wicked problems" thus involves advocating for comprehensive policy reviews through an anti-racist and equity-focused lens, promoting inclusive

participation among educators, administrators, and community stakeholders. In this regard, positionality extends beyond personal reflection to institutional praxis—it demands that organizations themselves adopt reflexive, accountable postures, ensuring policies and practices reflect the diverse lived realities of the communities they serve. Such holistic engagement not only reinforces a shared commitment to equity but also strengthens the relational foundations upon which collaborative commitment in both educational and research contexts rests (Butin, 2007).

5.5 Understanding Positionality and its Implications

Positionality, in its common interpretation, plays a vital role in exploring the complexities of power and privilege within collaborative environments. This is especially relevant when considering the context of settler scholarship (Butin, 2007; Smith, 2012). Understanding one's positionality helps identify how various identities influence perspectives and interactions, ultimately impacting the dynamics within collaborative efforts. As highlighted by Butin (2007), a focused commitment to community engagement necessitates an awareness of these dynamics, which are shaped by historical and contemporary power structures. Similarly, Fine (2007) emphasizes that such awareness is crucial for facilitating social justice within educational contexts. This awareness not only fosters more equitable collaborations but also strengthens faculty and institutional commitments to meaningful community involvement (Butin, 2007; Tuck, 2009). In essence, recognizing and reflecting on positionality serves as a foundational step in navigating and addressing the intricate relationships between power, privilege, and collaboration in higher education and beyond (St. Denis, 2011). In essence, recognizing and reflecting on positionality serves as a foundational step in navigating and addressing the intricate relationships between power, privilege, and collaboration in higher education and beyond.

This recognition encompasses analyzing one's geographic, cultural, and social positioning that shapes one's perspectives and influences interactions within academic and community circles. Positionality not only informs the questions scholars ask but also dictates the methodologies employed and the interpretations made. Acknowledging these factors enables settler scholars to critically reflect on how their positionality reinforces or challenges existing inequities. For instance, incorporating Indigenous Knowledge Holders into governance structures, as highlighted by the initiatives at Big River College, illustrates a commitment to decolonization and collaborative engagement that recognizes the need for shared decision-making processes, essential for genuine reconciliation and equity as articulated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action (McCagg-Nystrom, 2024). Moreover, positionality necessitates an examination of systemic barriers and the ways in which they perpetuate social injustices within educational settings.

Settler scholars are tasked with not only acknowledging their privileges but also confronting the systemic racism that persistently operates in public institutions, such as school districts in British Columbia. The analysis of human resource policies through a critical anti-racist lens is imperative for dismantling these barriers (Jopling et al., 2025; Davis, 2020;). Adopting a place-based change model combined with a human relations approach can foster an environment where diversity, equity, and inclusion are prioritized. As noted in the initiative addressing the lack of anti-racist policies in educational practice, systemic transformation requires intentionality and a sustained commitment to change, effectively bridging the equity and belonging gaps that plague marginalized student populations (Antifaeff, 2024). Finally, the implications of positionality extend into the curriculum, compelling educators to adapt traditional pedagogies to foster a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment. By integrating IKS into elementary science curricula, educators can cultivate a richer understanding of ecological sustainability that resonates with diverse student identities. This transformation is not merely academic; it involves nurturing relationships with the land and community through place-based, inquiry-driven approaches that resonate with Indigenous worldviews. As demonstrated in efforts to challenge Eurocentric frameworks in science education, the validation of Indigenous perspectives not only enhances student engagement but also fosters critical thinking about identity and sustainability. Ensuring that these pedagogical shifts are accessible and beneficial for a broad range of educators is essential for implementing a curriculum that honors the interconnectedness of all knowledge systems (Potocki, 2025).

5.6 The Influence of Personal Background on Research Outcomes

The intricate relationship between personal background and research outcomes is underscored by how settler scholars engage with diverse communities and their lived experiences. A scholar's identity — including race, class, gender, and cultural heritage - enables a unique lens through which research inquiries are framed and conducted. For instance, scholars with Indigenous backgrounds might approach climate justice through a perspective rooted in community and collective care, as highlighted in the actions to foster critical climate justice in Australia and Western Australia, serving as an example of positionality that shapes research outcomes (Wrigley, 2024). Conversely, settler scholars may inadvertently perpetuate colonial narratives if they lack awareness of their positional shapes and the responsibilities inherent in conducting research with marginalized communities (Watson and Jeppensen, 2020). Thus, recognition and acknowledgment of one's identity become crucial for achieving not only equitable research but also for amplifying the voices and needs of those most affected by the issues under study. Moreover, the ethical implications of scholarly research necessitate an understanding of ones positionality in relation to the communities involved. The concepts of reciprocal respect and culturally responsive methodologies emerge as vital principles in this context. For example, the work focused on Indigenous wellness measures reflects a commitment to inclusive research practices that invite community perspectives to the forefront, thereby ensuring that research outcomes resonate authentically with community-defined goals (Renner, 2025). Similarly, the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems into educational curricula serves to dismantle Eurocentric frameworks that have historically marginalized Indigenous voices (Potocki, 2025). These examples showcase a framework wherein personal and cultural backgrounds influence research methodology and outcomes, reinforcing the necessity for scholars to approach their work with a heightened sensitivity to the historical and sociopolitical dynamics at play. Ultimately, the impact of personal background on research outcomes cannot be underestimated, particularly in the context of addressing systemic inequities prevalent in educational and health systems. Understanding the barriers faced by administrators in predominantly white institutions illuminates a critical need for equitable leadership capacity, as emphasized in frameworks that advocate for transformative leadership and collaborative approaches (Maliha, 2024). This emphasis on self-reflection and critical engagement with equity not only informs the development of action plans for systemic change but also cultivates an environment where diverse perspectives are genuinely valued. Therefore, the recognition of personal background becomes essential not only for advancing research quality but also for fostering inclusive practices that empower marginalized communities in the pursuit of social justice within academic contexts.

5.7 Ethical Considerations in Acknowledging Positionality

According to Shaw et al. (2019) (and previous in Butin, 2007 and Smith, 2012), acknowledging positionality is paramount in ethical research, particularly within the context of settler scholar engagement with Indigenous communities. This recognition entails an introspective examination of how one's social location — encompassing race, class, gender, and cultural affiliations—shapes the research process and its outcomes. Ethical considerations must extend beyond mere acknowledgment; they demand an active commitment to redressing power imbalances that have historically disenfranchised Indigenous voices. By embracing a collaborative framework, researchers can facilitate equitable partnerships that prioritize community perspectives. Such practices, as illustrated in projects outlined in this essay, not only enhance the validity of research findings but also foster trust and respect between scholars and Indigenous peoples. This commitment to ethical engagement serves as a catalyst for decolonization efforts, ensuring that knowledge production reflects Indigenous agency and resilience (Mad Plume, 2024).

The intersection of ethical considerations and positionality in research methodologies necessitates a critical reflexivity that interrogates the underlying assumptions of existing educational practices. As evidenced in the analysis of systemic barriers in K-12 education for Indigenous students, such an approach reveals the detrimental effects of settler colonialism, characterized by a deficit-thinking paradigm and unconscious biases (Potocki, 2025). To conduct ethical research, scholars need to actively challenge and break down colonial narratives. This means promoting leadership that values collaboration and works to create inclusive educational spaces for everyone (Ricco, 2024). This transformation not only

involves curricular adaptations that integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems, as outlined in project initiatives, but also the cultivation of educator's critical consciousness regarding their own positionality (Barron, 2024). Concurrently, these efforts demand ongoing dialogue among stakeholders, ensuring that strategies remain responsive to community-defined needs and aspirations. Ultimately, the ethical implications of acknowledging positionality extend to the broader realm of social equity and responsibility. The necessity for accountability in research is amplified in the context of addressing historical injustices faced by Indigenous populations (Avramovic, 2024). Settler scholars must confront the complexities of their roles as beneficiaries of colonial structures while actively engaging with the imperative to dismantle them. Ethical engagement not only enhances the relevance of scholarly work but also positions researchers as allies in the pursuit of equity and justice (Balasco et al.,2024). This confluence of ethical reflection, community responsiveness, and collaborative commitment embodies a comprehensive approach to research that aspires to elevate Indigenous knowledge and promote equitable outcomes. In conducting research through this lens, scholars contribute to a collective movement toward decolonization, which fundamentally transforms the landscape of educational practice and advocacy.

5.8 Barriers to Achieving Equity for Marginalized Voices

Despite the growing recognition of systemic inequities, substantial barriers persist in achieving equity for marginalized voices within educational frameworks. Predominantly white administrative leadership often lacks the skills necessary to effectively address systemic racism, resulting in policies that inadequately support marginalized students. This gap in equitable leadership capabilities is compounded by deeply ingrained personal beliefs and institutional norms that hinder meaningful change. By framing this challenge through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and culturally responsive leadership, educational practitioners can better understand these complexities and implement transformative practices. Consequently, it is essential to establish a comprehensive organizational plan that equips administrators with the knowledge and tools necessary to cultivate equitable environments, thereby advancing broader social justice objectives within the educational setting (Maliha, 2024). In examining the intersection of race and workplace equity, it becomes apparent that systemic barriers extend beyond individual attitudes to institutional policies, which often reflect ingrained biases. These biases manifest within human resources practices and educational curricula that favor Eurocentric paradigms, marginalizing diverse cultural narratives. The integration of Critical Theory and transformative leadership offers a pathway to confront these systemic issues head-on. For instance, adopting an anti-racist lens when reviewing HR policies can catalyze significant shifts towards inclusive practices. By engaging in appreciative inquiry and fostering stakeholder participation, educational institutions can create dynamic frameworks aimed at promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. A commitment to this transformative approach not only promises to enhance participation among marginalized groups but serves as a cornerstone for dismantling systemic barriers within educational systems (Antifaeff, 2024). Furthermore, successful integration of Indigenous knowledge within curricula remains crucial to achieving equitable educational outcomes yet remains stymied by the dominant Eurocentric framework. The lack of relevant and authentic representation of Indigenous perspectives often leads to a disconnect for Indigenous students, adversely affecting their academic engagement and success. As evidenced in various studies, curricula that incorporate Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and reflect culturally responsive practices can significantly enhance the learning experience. Thus, it is imperative for educators to reevaluate existing instructional approaches and curricular models to purposefully include IKS. Such an endeavor not only affirms students' identities but actively contributes to dismantling colonial narratives embedded within the educational landscape. By achieving this, educational systems can move toward more inclusive and transformative learning environments that validate diverse ways of knowing and being (Potocki, 2025; Barron, 2024).

5.9 Strategies for Promoting Equity in Research Practices

An effective strategy for promoting equity in research practices involves the implementation of culturally responsive methodologies that prioritize the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). As highlighted in the project aimed at adapting elementary science curricula, incorporating IKS invites a more holistic understanding of ecological and scientific principles, thereby challenging the

Eurocentric paradigms that traditionally dominate research settings (Shackeroff & Campbell, 2007). By centering Indigenous narratives and learning styles, researchers not only validate the cultural identities of participants but also enhance engagement and retention of knowledge among diverse student populations. Consequently, collaborative projects that are grounded in place-based learning facilitate deeper connections between communities and researchers, fostering an atmosphere of respect and mutual empowerment. These approaches align with the growing recognition of the importance of community involvement as a cornerstone of ethical research practices, situating Indigenous perspectives at the heart of scholarly inquiry, as demonstrated in (Mad Plume, 2024). Moreover, addressing systemic barriers in institutional frameworks is crucial for promoting equity within research practices. The analysis of human relations policies through an anti-racist lens emphasizes the need for transformative leadership that disrupts ingrained biases and fosters diversity within research teams. By employing critical theory and an appreciative inquiry methodology, stakeholders can collaboratively develop policies that embrace equity and inclusion, as evidenced by initiatives within public school districts in British Columbia. Such frameworks not only support equitable access for marginalized groups but also facilitate the dialogues necessary for systemic change. Engaging in reflective practices allows researchers to confront their positionalities and cultivate a culture where diverse perspectives are integral to research agendas. This commitment to fostering equity is essential for dismantling historical inequities that have persisted within academic research institutions, as seen in (Antifaeff, 2024). Finally, the enactment of responsive and contextualized educational programming serves as an essential strategy for advancing equity in research practices. The design of curricula that contextualize Indigenous knowledge within existing educational standards exemplifies this approach. Research indicates that when students engage with content that resonates with their cultural backgrounds, along with the integration of land-based learning and language programming, they experience improved educational outcomes and enhanced critical thinking. This transformative approach allows for the convergence of Indigenous and Western scientific paradigms, ultimately promoting a more inclusive educational landscape. By fostering conditions for dialogue and reflexivity among educators and researchers alike, there lies an opportunity to recalibrate existing biases and norms in educational settings. Achieving this requires a commitment to continuous learning and adaptation, ensuring that research practices not only honor but actively elevate Indigenous voices, as underscored by the findings in (Potocki, 2025) and (Barron 2024).

6. HEUTAGOGICAL — OR SELF-DETERMINED LEARNING — PERSPECTIVES

Heutagogical—or self-determined learning—perspectives offer a powerful equity-oriented extension to participatory research by shifting the locus of control toward community participants and co-researchers (Viswanathan et al., 2004). Unlike traditional pedagogical models that presume researcher-defined objectives and hierarchies of knowledge, heutagogy foregrounds learner agency, reflection, and capability development, enabling individuals and communities to define what counts as relevant knowledge, how it is pursued, and what success looks like. This orientation aligns with equity aims because it actively counters-imposed research agendas and epistemic marginalization; instead of recipients of knowledge, community members become architects of inquiry, exercising voice in agenda-setting, methodology, and interpretation. Such empowerment deepens ethical engagement, resonating with critical pedagogical imperatives about consciousness and dialogue (Blaschke, 2012; Freire, 1970; Hase and Kenyon, 2000).

Core principles of heutagogy — double-loop learning, meta-cognition, non-linear pathway negotiation, and capacity-building for self-directed inquiry — make research more adaptive and accountable to participants' evolving needs. Embedding reflective checkpoints and iterative feedback loops ensures that the research process is co-owned, enabling recalibration when power imbalances surface or community priorities shift. When participants are supported to develop their own learning and evaluative criteria, the research partnership moves beyond extractive knowledge collection to sustained capability transfer, cultivating enduring skills for community-led inquiry and advocacy. This deepens collaborative commitment by treating Indigenous and marginalized knowledge holders not merely as informants but as co-authors of both process and products (Blaschke, 2012; Canning, 2010).

Practically, integrating heutagogical strategies into equity-oriented research means co-designing research agendas with community partners, providing scaffolding and resources for self-determined participation, and institutionalizing shared authorship and reflexive governance structures. Examples

include developing joint training modules that build community capacity in framing questions and conducting analysis, establishing "learning contracts" or mutually agreed-upon goals that can evolve, and creating open, negotiated metrics for impact and success. These mechanisms help normalize reciprocal accountability, making the research "with" rather than "on" communities, and support sustained transformation of epistemic relations — placing equitable knowledge co-creation at the heart of scholarly practice (Blaschke, 2012; Canning, 2010).

6.1 Integrating Heutagogical Strategies with Settler Scholar Positionality

Heutagogical perspectives deepen and give practical shape to the commitments articulated in *Settler Scholar Positionality, Equity and Collaborative Commitment in Higher Education Reform* (Vander Kloet, 2025), by explicitly redistributing epistemic agency and embedding reflexivity into co-creative processes. The document's emphasis on positionality, shared governance, and collaborative commitment — exemplified by the institutionalization of Indigenous Knowledge Holders Councils and the framing of settler scholars as reflexive partners rather than expert dominators — creates a foundation that heutagogy amplifies. By centering self-determined learning, double-loop reflection, and negotiated learning pathways, heutagogy transforms community members and Indigenous partners from "participants" into co-authors of research agendas, evaluation criteria, and knowledge products, aligning with the paper's call for moving beyond performative allyship toward genuine mutuality and accountability (see discussions of positionality and co-governance; Secules et al., 2021; McCagg-Nystrom, 2024; Archer, 2024). This orientation also resonates with critical and dialogic traditions — such as those articulated by Freire (1970) — and extends the document's reflexive ethics by enabling settler scholars to continuously interrogate their own location while supporting partners' autonomy in defining relevance and success.

The operational principles of heutagogy — meta-cognition, evolving "learning contracts", and iterative feedback loops — serve as mechanisms to realize the transformative practices the document advocates. For example, the use of Two-Eyed Seeing and adaptive change models in the paper (e.g., third-order change through reflexive leadership and integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems) becomes more equitable when learning goals, metrics, and process adjustments are co-negotiated with community partners, not imposed from above (Archer, 2024; Barron, 2024; McCagg-Nystrom, 2024). Collaborative teaching and curriculum redesign efforts, such as the partnerships between Indigenous and settler nurse educators, illustrate how reflective, capability-building engagement leads to shared ownership of both process and outcomes—precisely the kind of capability development heutagogy foregrounds (Daly and Kelly, 2024; León, 2025). Embedding these iterative, self-directed elements into research and reform practices helps surface and recalibrate power imbalances in real time, making equity adaptive rather than static.

In the context of higher education reform, integrating heutagogical strategies with the settler scholar positionality framework signals a shift from consultative inclusion to co-determined transformation. Co-designing research agendas, establishing evolving shared learning goals, and cultivating institutional scaffolds that support autonomous community inquiry operationalize the paper's vision of equity as shared governance and sustained collaborative commitment (illustrated in the collaborative commitment and decolonial reflexivity sections. This approach also reinforces the imperative to dismantle hegemonic structures — visualized in the governance paradigms and equity frameworks — by normalizing reciprocal accountability and enabling indigenous epistemologies to inform what counts as legitimate knowledge and impact (Trimble, 2024). Heutagogy thus helps settler scholars enact the reformist aspirations in the document: continually interrogating their own positionality while redistributing epistemic power, making equity not only a descriptive goal but a generative, practice-embedded reality.

7. COLLABORATIVE COMMITMENT IN SCHOLARSHIP

In the pursuit of equitable scholarship, a collaborative commitment emerges as a foundational pillar that seeks to deconstruct traditional hierarchies within academic research. This paradigm shift is particularly salient in the context of settler scholarship, where scholars must acknowledge their positionality and its implications on research practices. By fostering genuine partnerships with

marginalized communities, researchers can not only enhance the reliability of their findings but also ensure that the voices of those often left behind are brought to the forefront. For instance, initiatives like Measuring Wellness Through Indigenous Partnerships underscore the necessity of community involvement in shaping research agendas, aligning closely with principles of ethical scholarship (Mad Plume, 2024; King, 2023). Such collaborative frameworks challenge prescriptive notions of representation, promoting a dialogue where power dynamics are critically examined and reconfigured, thereby fostering an environment conducive to mutual growth and understanding. The ethical dimensions of collaborative scholarship demand a reflexive approach, where scholars continuously interrogate their positionality in relation to their research subjects. This necessity is reinforced by critical engagements with decolonial feminist perspectives that advocate for recognizing the complex interplay between researcher and participant (Sims, 2023; Cueva et al, 2024). As articulated in discussions surrounding fieldwork, scholars must navigate the intricate landscapes of their own identities and the implications of their research methodologies within these contexts (Cueva et al., 2024). By embracing a commitment to reflexivity and anti-oppressive practices, researchers can not only enrich their understanding of the field but also work towards dismantling the entrenched systems that perpetuate inequity within academic spaces (Figure 3).

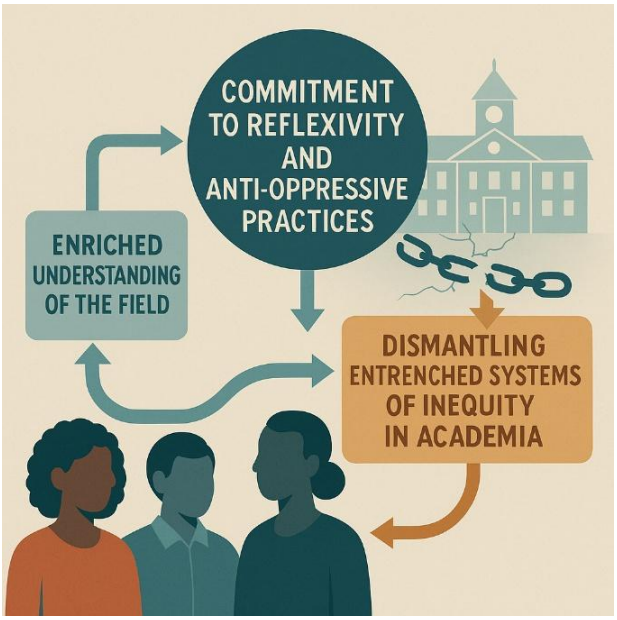
COMMITMENT TO REFLEXIVITY AND ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICES
ENRICHED UNDERSTANDING OF THE FIELD
DISMANTLING ENTRENCHED SYSTEMS OF INEQUITY IN ACADEMIA

Figure 3: Reflexive Anti-Oppression in Academia: Enriching Knowledge While Dismantling Inequity. Source; OpenAI (2025, August 1). *Commitment to reflexivity and anti-oppressive practice: Pathways to enriched understanding and systemic change* [Digital infographic]. Generated with DALL·E via ChatGPT.

Figure 2 encodes a cyclical, generative relationship: at its core is a commitment to reflexivity and anti-oppressive practice, which functions both as catalyst and grounding ethos. From that core arise two interlinked outcomes — an enriched understanding of the field and the dismantling of entrenched systems of inequity in academia — and the arrows imply reciprocal reinforcement. Reflexivity and anti-oppressive attention sharpen researchers' awareness of their own positionality, assumptions, and the power dynamics embedded in knowledge production, which deepens their conceptual and practical grasp of the field. That deeper understanding then feeds back, strengthening and refining the commitment, making it more informed and responsive. Simultaneously, anti-oppressive praxis works to break structural barriers (symbolized by the cracked chains beneath the academic building), creating space for more inclusive epistemologies; as those systems loosen, they enable further learning and more effective reflexive interventions.

The presence of diverse researcher silhouettes anchoring the diagram emphasizes that people—and relationships—are the agents animating the loop: equity and transformation aren't abstractions but enacted through human engagement, dialogue, co-design, and accountability. The broken chains and

institutional imagery signal that change is not merely individual (internal reflection) but structural: anti-oppressive commitments must lead to tangible shifts in governance, authorship, curricular authority, and who defines value. The mutual arrows suggest that dismantling inequity also enriches understanding — once oppressive filters are removed, previously marginalized perspectives surface, offering new insights that again inform more sophisticated, contextually grounded reflexivity.

Interpretively, the model functions as both diagnostic and aspirational. Diagnostic, in that it helps identify where a research practice might be stuck (e.g., reflexivity performed superficially without structural change, or equity rhetoric without deep learning) and aspirational, in that it portrays an iterative pathway toward more just scholarship. For application, the figure invites concrete moves: embedding structured reflective moments, co-creating metrics with marginalized partners, institutionalizing shared governance, and using feedback loops to adapt when power imbalances re-emerge. It also implicitly warns against performative versions — without mutual reinforcement and structural dismantling, the cycle stalls. The dual outcome focus will help readers grasp it as a model for sustained, practice-embedded equity work in higher education.

This critical stance propels a shift from viewing the researcher's role as autonomous to recognizing it as inherently collaborative, highlighting the importance of community-led agendas in shaping research trajectories. Furthermore, the integration of diverse epistemologies into scholarship serves as a catalyst for fostering inclusive academic environments. Insights stemming from collaborative commitments help articulate methodologies that are sensitive to intersectional identities and systemic inequities. For instance, the application of Movement-based Participatory Action Research (Mb-PAR) in climate justice organizing illustrates how community knowledge can inform academia, ultimately fostering collective care and relational justice practices (Wrigley, 2024). This intersectional approach not only broadens the scope of inquiry but also enhances the relevance of scholarly outputs in addressing pressing societal challenges. By foregrounding the lived experiences of marginalized populations, scholars can cultivate a transformative ethos that elevates inclusive collaboration as a normative principle within their research endeavors, thus contributing to a more equitable scholarly landscape pertinent to the future of innovation and advocacy.

7.1 Importance of Collaboration with Indigenous Communities

The importance of collaboration with Indigenous communities transcends mere engagement; it embodies a fundamental shift in research ethics and practices, fostering equitable relationships that reflect the distinct needs and aspirations of these communities. Such collaboration is paramount in advancing research initiatives within Indigenous health, as illustrated in the projects comprising my portfolio. For instance, the scoping review entitled Measuring Wellness Through Indigenous Partnerships emphasizes the necessity of community involvement in defining wellness measures, which subsequently informs culturally responsive methodologies crucial for sustainable outcomes (Mad Plume, 2024). By adopting collaborative frameworks, scholars not only acknowledge Indigenous knowledge systems but also empower communities to lead the discourse on their health realities, thereby facilitating a path toward reconciliation and shared governance in research initiatives. Furthermore, the integration of the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance underscores the nuanced relationship between data stewardship and Indigenous communities, serving as a critical point of reference for scholars engaged in collaborative work. The Data Services for Indigenous Scholarship and Sovereignty (DSISS) project articulates key themes such as ownership, trust, and relational accountability, which are essential for cultivating meaningful engagements with Indigenous data (Belarde-Lewis et al., 2024). It becomes evident that long-term sustainability of research outcomes demands a capacity for researchers to navigate these intricate relationships, ensuring that Indigenous voices are not only heard but are integral to the research process. Engaging Indigenous scholarship necessitates a commitment to building trust and respecting the interrelationships inherent within Indigenous ways of knowing, promoting an atmosphere of reciprocal accountability among collaborative partners. Finally, the aspiration to decolonize educational practices within secondary schools exemplifies the urgent need for collaborative methodologies that honor Indigenous perspectives. The two-eyed change model figure 3 showcased Archer's (2024) Dissertation-in-Practice highlights a transformative approach that synergizes Western educational systems with Indigenous principles, thereby addressing the equity and belonging gap prevalent in contemporary education (Archer, 2024).

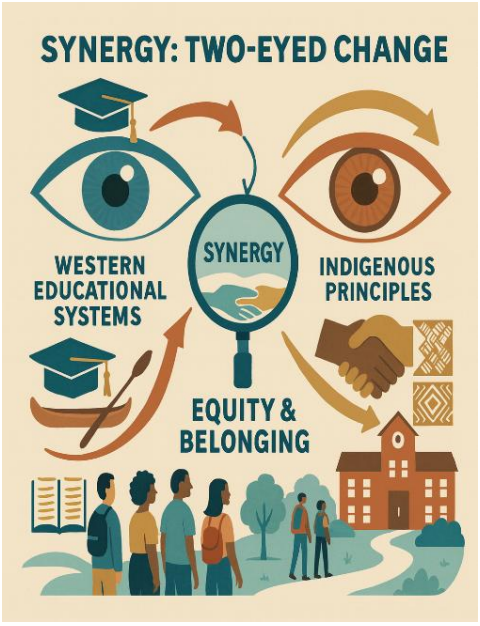

Figure 4: Integrating Western Educational Systems and Indigenous Principles to Advance Equity and Belonging. *Source*: Orcherton (2023b). *Synergy: Two-eyed change—Integrating Western educational systems and Indigenous principles to advance equity and belonging* [Conceptual infographic]. Generated with DALL·E via ChatGPT (OpenAI).

Figure 4 visualizes the "Two-Eyed Change" model as a binocular perspective where one eye represents Western educational systems and the other Indigenous principles. Their convergence in the central lens — labeled "Synergy" — symbolizes the transformative integration of both epistemologies (Orcherton, 2023a). This blended sight produces enhanced outcomes in equity and belonging, depicted by the pathway leading toward an inclusive academic institution and diverse learners. Arrows and connecting elements imply mutual reinforcement: the dialogic engagement between knowledge systems enriches understanding while simultaneously reshaping institutional practices to be more just and responsive. By depicting the two knowledge traditions as complementary rather than oppositional, the model emphasizes relationality, co-design, and shared agency. The handshake, traditional motifs, and academic iconography signal partnership and respect, while the students walking toward the institution represent the lived impact — students entering spaces made more inclusive through that synergistic change. In sum, the illustration makes visible how embracing both "eyes" together allows reform efforts to see more fully and act more equitably, closing the belonging gap that single-lens approaches often perpetuate.

Such practices extend beyond superficial inclusion, seeking to weave Indigenous narratives into the broader educational fabric through inquiry-driven and culturally sustaining pedagogies. This alignment not only validates Indigenous identities but also cultivates scientific literacy that respects and reflects diverse epistemologies, fostering an inclusive environment for all learners. The implications of these collaborative efforts resonate throughout the academic landscape, emphasizing the imperative for a shared commitment to equity in research and education.

7.2 Models of Successful Collaborative Research

Successful collaborative research models are essential for promoting equitable outcomes, particularly in the context of settler scholar positionality (Secules et al., 2021). Central to these models is the commitment to decolonization and the recognition of Indigenous epistemologies in research practices. By integrating transformative leadership approaches, researchers can dismantle colonial mental models that have historically marginalized Indigenous voices and experiences. For instance, employing Stroh's 4-stage change model (Barron, 2024), allows for a structured approach in achieving third-order change, which is crucial for reframing leadership practices in educational settings. This model highlights

the importance of collaborative visioning among educational partners, fostering an environment where all stakeholders engage in transformative learning processes. The focus on reflexivity and dialogic methods further enhances participants capacity to critically evaluate and reshape their mental frameworks, ensuring that collaborative efforts align with the principles of inclusivity and equity as articulated in the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Barron, 2024). In the realm of post-secondary institutions, the institutionalization of Indigenous Knowledge Holders Councils (IKHC) serves as a pertinent model for successful collaborative research. By integrating IKHC into governance structures, institutions can brazenly address the imperative of educational reconciliation as highlighted in the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action (McCagg-Nystrom, 2024).

This tri-cameral approach seeks to braid critical Indigenous perspectives with existing institutional frameworks, thus promoting a dual consciousness that respects both Indigenous and Western epistemologies (McCagg-Nystrom, 2024). A noteworthy aspect of this model is its grounding in culturally responsive and transformative leadership practices, which augment institutional legitimacy and foster a genuine commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. The emphasis on collaborative governance and shared decision-making processes not only enhances the integration of Indigenous knowledge but also contributes to long-term institutional success, allowing Indigenous faculty, staff, and students to thrive within a system that acknowledges their diverse narratives and experiences. Moreover, a critical analysis of systemic barriers reveals the necessity for collaborative research models that prioritize anti-racist practices and focus on the promotion of equity and belonging within educational settings. The absence of systemic anti-racist human relations policies creates significant challenges, reinforcing inequities and perpetuating the exclusion of marginalized voices (Antifaeff, 2024). By utilizing an appreciative inquiry framework (Watkins et al., 2016) in conjunction with a place-based change model (Cutter et al., 2008) researchers and educators can collaboratively address these existing disparities and foster an inclusive culture. For example, professional learning networks and inquiry pilots, grounded in Indigenous principles and culturally sustaining pedagogies, create avenues for meaningful engagement and transformative learning experiences. These collaborative frameworks advocate for transparency in communication and support ongoing evaluation processes, thereby enabling stakeholders to iteratively refine their strategies and practices. Ultimately, models that interweave diverse perspectives are essential for dismantling the hegemony of Eurocentric practices in education, ensuring that all members of the educational community feel a profound sense of belonging (Archer, 2024).

7.3 Challenges Faced in Establishing Genuine Partnerships

Establishing genuine partnerships between settlers[2] and Indigenous communities presents a complex array of challenges, primarily stemming from historical trust deficits and ingrained power imbalances. The legacy of colonialism has engendered a profound skepticism among Indigenous peoples regarding the intentions of settler scholars, often resulting in hesitance to engage meaningfully in collaborative efforts. Such sentiments are exacerbated by experiences of tokenism, where Indigenous contributions may be solicited without genuine integration into decision-making processes. As a result, any attempt to foster partnerships must confront and dismantle these historical inequities. An awareness of settler scholar positionality is essential in navigating these challenges, as it requires a critical examination of one's role, motivations, and the potential impact of research on Indigenous communities, thereby facilitating the development of equitable and respectful collaborative engagements (Mad Plume, 2024). In addition to historical mistrust, logistical barriers often hinder the formation of authentic partnerships. Differences in organizational cultures, operational mandates, and communication styles can create significant misunderstandings that complicate collaborative initiatives. Settler scholars may

[2] Here, "settlers" refers to people or groups who have originated from outside the Indigenous communities in the area and have established permanent residence or governance there, typically within a colonial or settler-colonial context. This term is used to distinguish non-Indigenous newcomers and their institutions from Indigenous peoples and their traditional sovereignty. In the given context, the term is likely being used to examine how genuine partnerships can be built between these non-Indigenous settlers (and their communities/organizations) and Indigenous communities, acknowledging several dynamics: Historical trust deficits: past actions, policies, and violence by settler governments or settlers themselves have eroded trust with Indigenous communities; Power imbalances: structural advantages held by settler societies (legal, economic, political, and cultural) compared with Indigenous communities, which can impede equitable collaboration and Relationship dynamics: the need to move beyond token partnerships toward co-creation, shared decision-making, and recognition of Indigenous sovereignty, knowledge systems, and rights.

approach partnerships with a structured, results-oriented mindset, while Indigenous communities might prioritize relationship-building and holistic approaches to projects. This dissonance can lead to frustrations on both sides, ultimately impairing the potential for meaningful collaboration. Moreover, the constraints of institutional frameworks often resist the flexibility needed to accommodate the diverse needs and perspectives of Indigenous partners. Addressing these disparities necessitates a commitment to adaptive leadership models that emphasize co-creation and shared governance, ensuring that the voices of Indigenous stakeholders are not only heard but actively shape project outcomes (Avramovic, 2024). The successful establishment of genuine partnerships also depends on addressing the systemic injustices inherent in the research landscape. Many Indigenous communities articulate that existing research frameworks may perpetuate a colonial narrative, failing to reflect their unique contexts and aspirations. Consequently, settler scholars are tasked with articulating a clear social justice agenda that critically examines how research practices can align more closely with Indigenous epistemologies and priorities. This requires a concerted effort to implement policies that not only seek to rectify historical inequities but also empower Indigenous voices in the creation of knowledge. Utilizing transformative leadership practices, as illustrated in recent initiatives, can facilitate such a shift by fostering an environment of reciprocity and mutual respect. By positioning Indigenous knowledge systems alongside academic research strategies, scholars can engage in meaningful partnerships that prioritize equity and collaborative commitment (Barron, 2024; Miller, 2024).

8. THE IMPACT OF SETTLER SCHOLAR PRACTICES

The practices of settler scholars often reflect a paradoxical relationship with the traditions and knowledge systems of Indigenous communities they study. While settler scholars engage in diverse academic inquiries aimed at addressing historical inequities, their methodologies frequently remain enmeshed within a Eurocentric framework that prioritizes Western epistemologies. Such frameworks perpetuate systemic racism and contribute to the marginalization of Indigenous voices in both research and practice. For instance, the acknowledgment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action (#62) (Jewell and Mosby, 2022) underscores a critical move towards integrating Indigenous knowledge within educational systems that have historically sidelined these perspectives (McCagg-Nystrom, 2024). However, settler scholars must critically assess their positionality and the implications of their practices to avoid enacting a form of intellectual colonialism, thereby reinforcing existing power imbalances rather than dismantling them. Moreover, the capacity of settler scholars to engage in meaningful collaboration with Indigenous communities' hinges on their commitment to ethical research practices that prioritize reciprocity and community engagement. An ethical research framework necessitates recognizing and addressing the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization, specifically in terms of health, education, and policy initiatives. By implementing culturally responsive methodologies, settler scholars can facilitate genuine partnerships that honor Indigenous knowledge systems and practices (Mad Plume, 2024).

The responsibility to foster such collaborations is further accentuated by the need for accountability in institutional practices, as demonstrated by efforts to create spaces for the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge Holders within academic governance (McCagg-Nystrom, 2024). Effective advocacy for Indigenous equity within research contexts requires settler scholars to engage in transformative leadership, thereby fostering environments where all voices are valued and heard. Finally, the advancement of equity and belonging within educational institutions remains a paramount challenge for settler scholars who must navigate the complex landscape of systemic inequities. This challenge is particularly evident in secondary education, where approximately half of students express feelings of disconnection from their schools. In addressing this equity and belonging gap, settler scholars can adopt a two-eyed approach that combines Indigenous principles with Western pedagogical frameworks to create inclusive learning environments. Initiatives such as professional learning networks for educators and inquiry-based collaborative projects can strengthen the integration of diverse cultural perspectives. Ultimately, the commitment to reshape scholarly practices toward a more equitable paradigm necessitates ongoing reflection and adjustment by settler scholars to ensure that their contributions genuinely serve to uplift marginalized communities rather than inadvertently reinforce existing disparities.

8.1 Consequences of Ignoring Settler Positionality

The implications of neglecting settler positionality in academic discourse reveal profound consequences for both scholarship and societal justice (King, 2023). Ignoring this critical vantage point results in a perpetuation of epistemic injustice, where Indigenous perspectives are either marginalized or wholly excluded from discussions that impact their communities. This oversight not only diminishes the potential for inclusive dialogue but also perpetuates systemic inequalities that have far-reaching effects on Indigenous populations. The implications extend into educational frameworks, wherein settler scholars may unwittingly endorse narratives that reinforce colonial structures instead of advancing decolonization and equity. Such omissions underscore the need for a paradigm shift in how academia addresses settler identities, demanding an integrated approach that acknowledges historical contexts and advocates for collaborative commitments to equity and justice. In light of this, engaging with (Molla, 2025) becomes essential, as it critiques narrow definitions of academic work that may inadvertently uphold these colonial legacies. The consequences of disregarding settler positionality are particularly evident in K-12 educational settings, where policies often fail to account for the lived realities of Indigenous students. The influence of settler colonialism manifests through biased pedagogical practices and leadership attitudes that sustain achievement gaps for Indigenous learners, as explored in (Barron, 2024). Such systemic barriers compromise the educational experiences of Indigenous youth, undermining their potential for success within a structure that is fundamentally inequitable. Furthermore, the absence of settler accountability in these conversations diminishes the ethical imperatives that surround educational reform, wherein settler scholars must take a proactive stance in dismantling colonial legacies embedded in educational practice. A collective re-evaluation of leadership approaches, particularly through critical and transformative frameworks, is crucial in cultivating a more equitable educational landscape that prioritizes belonging and agency for Indigenous students, aligning with the urgent call for systemic change (Beresford-Dey, 2025). Moreover, an according to King (2023) and Weuffen (2024), ignoring settler positionality hinders the efficacy of anti-racist frameworks within educational institutions. The limited understanding of intersectionality in this context can result in generic applications of ethnic studies curricula that fail to resonate with or adequately address the complexities of marginalized communities, as illustrated in (León, 2025; Manglicmot, 2025). Such disconnections render the commitment to inclusivity superficial, deterring meaningful engagement with diverse epistemologies and pedagogical practices. Employing a two-eyed approach, which harmonizes Indigenous principles with Western systems thinking, cultivates space for genuine dialogue and exploration of anti-racist methodologies, as detailed in Archer (2024); Constant-Inglis (2023). Anecdotal to this, Sahoo (2025) acknowledges the multifaceted nature of identity and positionality not only enriches educational discourse but also enhances the collective capacity to devise strategies that promote transformative learning experiences. Ultimately, an intentional focus on settler positionality serves as a catalyst for developing more nuanced and authentic educational paradigms that reflect the diverse realities of all learners, thereby fostering equity and commitment to social justice.

8.2 The Role of Settler Scholars in Perpetuating Inequities

In the discourse surrounding the *role of settler scholars* (Johnson and Endres, 2021), it is essential to recognize how their positionality can inadvertently perpetuate systemic inequities. Settler scholars, often situated within predominantly white institutions, may adhere to a framework that prioritizes their own narratives while marginalizing Indigenous perspectives. This phenomenon is exemplified by notions such as Midwest Nice, which, while seemingly benign, can serve to silence critical anti-racist dialogues — thereby reinforcing existing power structures. By adopting a stance of neutrality or civility, settler scholars risk enacting a form of academic gatekeeping that stifles the necessary discussions around privilege, race, and responsibility in addressing historical injustices (Homan, 2025). Consequently, their scholarship may unwittingly contribute to the erasure of Indigenous voices and experiences, stalling progress towards achieving equitable academic landscapes that are responsive to the needs of marginalized communities. A further examination reveals how the predominant narratives crafted by settler scholars risk homogenizing the complex realities faced by marginalized communities. Through research outputs often lacking in community engagement, these scholars reproduce structural inequalities that undermine the resilience and agency of Indigenous populations. The intersections of

environmental justice and urban development illustrate this dilemma, highlighting how settler narratives often neglect crucial community-specific contexts that inform residents lived experiences. For instance, *gentrification policies* — though ostensibly framed as urban renewal — can displace marginalized groups, exacerbating vulnerabilities that settler scholars may overlook (Machado-Escudero et al., 2025). By failing to interrogate these dynamics critically, they reinforce a cycle of dispossession, as their work may not adequately address the ongoing impacts of colonial legacies within these settings. This necessitates a re-evaluation of how scholarship is produced and disseminated, underscoring the need for collaborative, community-driven frameworks that genuinely reflect diverse experiences. Engaged scholarship posits a transformative potential that, when actualized effectively, could counteract the perpetuation of inequities.

Settler scholars (it seems) must grapple with the discontents associated with this approach. These can range from narrow definitions of academic work, which often privilege Eurocentric knowledge, to the emotional and intellectual toll taken by engaging in public discourse (Molla, 2024). Without institutional support systems and an ethos of co-learning, settler scholars may experience burnout, potentially abandoning critical collaborations that could contribute to social change. Furthermore, initiatives demonstrating participatory methods, such as community-based photovoice projects, emphasize this necessity for systemic change (Molla, 2025; Rosas et al., 2024; Bell and Lewis, 2023 and Yoon et al., 2018). By centering the voices of marginalized groups, these collaborative efforts allow for a reclamation of agency and endorse a vision of social equity that challenges the oppressive legacies of settler knowledge production. Thus, a commitment to equity must accompany a re-evaluation of positionality, fostering partnerships grounded in mutual respect and shared purpose.

9. FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR SETTLER SCHOLARS

Future directions for settler scholars necessitate a profound and sustained commitment to integrating Indigenous methodologies into academic research, thereby fostering forms of collaboration that explicitly challenge colonial paradigms and institutional inertia. This analysis extends current literature on settler positionality by moving beyond theoretical acknowledgment of privilege to emphasize how positional reflexivity can *operationalize* change within higher education systems. As outlined in contemporary discourse, settler scholars must prioritize ethical engagement with Indigenous communities — ensuring that research practices not only recognize but also activate and sustain Indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate and coequal sources of epistemic authority. This focus on praxis marks a distinct contribution to existing scholarship: it situates positionality as a transformative tool for reshaping institutional norms rather than merely as a reflective stance.

This transition toward ethical, relational scholarship entails revising curricula to integrate Indigenous perspectives and values into pedagogical and research frameworks. Projects such as *Measuring Wellness Through Indigenous Partnerships* (Mad Plume, 2024) demonstrate the value of collaborative methodologies that place community-defined notions of wellness and success at the center of inquiry. These initiatives underscore the necessity of community involvement in defining research priorities, aligning academic inquiry with the cultural values and relational ethics integral to Indigenous worldviews. By highlighting these examples, this analysis reinforces that decolonial research must move from consultation to co-creation, thereby advancing a paradigm of shared authorship and accountability that expands on earlier theoretical work in decolonial studies.

Emphasizing institutional commitments to reconciliation is equally critical for settler scholars seeking to transform higher education environments into spaces of collaborative commitment and mutual respect. As articulated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action*, post-secondary institutions bear a responsibility to restructure their approaches in alignment with Indigenous epistemologies and governance practices (McCagg-Nystrom, 2024). This analysis adds to current literature by identifying specific pathways — such as integrating Indigenous Knowledge Holders Councils into institutional governance — as pragmatic strategies for indigenization. These governance innovations illustrate a shift toward tri-cameral decision-making models that actively include local Indigenous voices, thereby bridging epistemological and administrative divides. The practical implication is clear: institutional reform must embed reconciliation not as an aspirational statement but as a structural reconfiguration of how authority, expertise, and accountability are shared. This approach advances the discourse on higher education reform by illustrating how positional awareness can guide tangible institutional design.

Moreover, settler scholars can employ transformative leadership frameworks to address the systemic barriers that perpetuate exclusion and inequity within educational contexts. As highlighted in the discourse on anti-racist pedagogy, there is an ongoing need for educators to engage in continuous professional development and critical self-reflection, deepening their capacity to enact culturally responsive and socially just pedagogies (Maliha, 2024). This analysis contributes to current debates by linking positionality to leadership praxis, suggesting that reflexive awareness can serve as the foundation for organizational transformation. Through initiatives emphasizing critical consciousness, settler scholars can facilitate sustained dialogue that interrogates inequitable practices and fosters institutional accountability.

9.1 Implementing Solutions

In many cases, this requires collaborative models, such as community partnerships in ethnic studies pedagogy, exemplifies how equity can be operationalized within curriculum and governance systems (Manglicmot, 2025). These pathways not only empower marginalized voices but also redefine the role of settler scholars as co-advocates for social justice, advancing the shift from performative allyship to relational solidarity. Consequently, this work contributes to the growing literature that frames decolonial research as both methodological and institutional transformation, enriching the discourse on equity, belonging, and systemic reform. By situating positionality as a dynamic force — one that informs ethics, pedagogy, and leadership — this analysis underscores its potential to produce structural change in higher education that is reflective, inclusive, and enduring (Macoun and Strakosch (2013).

9.2 Recommendations for Ethical Research Practices

The ethical conduct of research, particularly in studies involving marginalized communities, necessitates a comprehensive understanding of both the implicit and explicit power dynamics at play (Andress et al., 2020). Researchers, especially settler scholars, must critically analyze their positionality and how it can influence participants experiences and the data collected. Recommendations for ethical research practices include adopting a reflexive approach, which encourages scholars to continuously reflect on their biases and privileges throughout the research process. Additionally, employing participatory frameworks, such as Movement-based Participatory Action Research (Wrigley, 2024), can enhance engagement with community members and ensure their voices are integral to the research narrative (Wrigley, 2024). This method allows for co-creation of knowledge, positioning the study within the lived realities of those it aims to serve, thereby promoting a more equitable research environment. Furthermore, ethical research practices must prioritize the principles of reciprocity and community benefit (McCubbin and Moniz, 2014). Settler scholars should engage in meaningful partnerships with Indigenous and marginalized communities, ensuring that research outputs are accessible and beneficial to those communities. Ethical obligations extend beyond data collection; they encompass the translation of research findings into tangible actions that address the identified needs of the studied populations. Recommendations to enhance community benefit may involve the establishment of Community Advisory Boards or the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Holders into governance structures within academic institutions (McCagg-Nystrom, 2024). Additionally, addressing institutional barriers to the incorporation of such perspectives is crucial. By fostering genuine collaboration, researchers substantiate their commitment to equity and social justice, thereby enhancing the impact of their work. Lastly, it is imperative for researchers to incorporate anti-oppression frameworks (Yee et al., 2025) in their methodologies. This approach acknowledges systemic inequalities linked to race, gender, and class that shape the research landscape. By integrating critical, intersectional perspectives, scholars can disrupt dominant narratives and challenge the underlying structures that contribute to inequality and marginalization within research (Gabriel, 2025). The inclusion of Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and anti-ableist pedagogies (Nieminen and Pesonen, 2022) in the curriculum and research design can also broaden the epistemological horizons and challenge conventional academic assumptions (Phillips, 2025). Ultimately, ethical research practices must reflect a commitment to inclusivity, social justice, and collaborative commitment while continuously seeking to dismantle the inequities inherent in traditional

research paradigms. This alignment not only advances scholarly integrity but also cultivates an academic environment conducive to genuine transformation.

9.3 The Necessity of Ongoing Education and Reflection

The necessity of ongoing education and reflection is particularly salient in addressing the inadequate educational outcomes for Indigenous students within K-12 settings. Critical theory suggests that educational systems in Alberta, as analyzed in Three Bear Hills School Division, perpetuate systemic barriers rooted in settler colonial practices that adversely affect Indigenous students' graduation and post-secondary aspirations (Barron, 2024). The enduring presence of deficit thinking and bias illustrates the imperative for educators to engage in reflective practices that question their preconceived notions and institutional frameworks. By adopting a critical consciousness, informed by transformative learning theory, school leaders can reframe their leadership models, thereby dismantling colonial mental models entrenched in educational settings. This shift is not merely a "band-aid fix" or remedial; it is foundational for fostering equitable educational outcomes, highlighting the urgent need for continuous professional development rooted in equity and collaboration. Equity-focused pedagogies necessitate the collaborative commitment of educators to confront the complexities of systemic racism embedded within their institutions. The exploration of anti-racist and Indigenist curricula, such as those developed through partnerships between Indigenous community nurses and white settler nurse educators, serves as a compelling case study of innovation in teaching strategies (Daly & Kelly, 2024). In these models, ongoing education fosters a shared understanding that enriches pedagogical approaches while promoting a culture of inclusivity. However, the challenges inherent in these collaborations underscore the need for persistent self-reflection among educators. The development of confidence and competence in delivering content that resonates with diverse populations demands a sustained commitment to learning, dialogue, and mutual growth. Such collaborative frameworks not only enhance educational practices but also cultivate respect for Indigenous Knowledge Systems, ultimately contributing to the decolonization of educational curricula. Integrating culturally responsive teaching within mainstream educational frameworks effectively addresses the longstanding equity and belonging gap experienced by many students, particularly in the context of secondary education. Research focusing on decolonizing practice reveals a pressing need for educational leaders to adopt two-eyed perspectives that incorporate both Indigenous principles and Western systems thinking, thereby establishing inclusive environments for all learners (Archer, 2024). By implementing inquiry-driven, place-based lessons that align with Indigenous perspectives, educators promote authentic engagement with knowledge and foster students' connection to their communities (Potocki, 2025). Reflection serves as an indispensable tool in this transformation, enabling educators to assess and adapt their methodologies continually. As they engage in this iterative process, they must remain aware of how their positionality shapes their interactions with students, reinforcing the significance of ongoing education and reflection as catalysts for genuine equity and collaborative commitment within the educational landscape.

9.4 Building Sustainable Relationships with Indigenous Scholars

The process of building sustainable relationships with Indigenous scholars necessitates a foundational understanding of the historical contexts and contemporary realities that shape these interactions. Engaging meaningfully with Indigenous scholars requires an acknowledgment of the legacies of colonialism and systemic racism that have permeated academic institutions. As highlighted in the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions calls to action regarding educational reform, there is a pressing need to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into the fabric of higher education. Institutions must not only rectify past injustices but also cultivate environments where Indigenous knowledge systems are respected and integrated into curricula. This approach reflects a transformative shift in scholarly paradigms, moving away from traditional Eurocentric frameworks, thereby fostering an inclusive academic landscape that values diverse epistemologies and methodologies (Daly & Kelly, 2024). To effectively foster collaborative commitments, it is crucial for settler scholars to confront their positionality within the academic hierarchy. This involves recognizing the privileges associated with their identities while actively seeking partnerships that empower Indigenous scholars. Collaborative teaching and research initiatives should be designed with careful consideration of equitable power

dynamics, ensuring that Indigenous voices lead the discourse on their own knowledge systems. Empirical evidence indicates that collaborative teaching strategies, whereby Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators work together, yield mutually beneficial outcomes that enhance the intellectual rigor of academic programs (Daly, 2024). Such cooperative endeavors enable settler scholars to cultivate a deeper understanding of Indigenous methodologies and perspectives, ultimately enriching the educational experiences of all participants involved. Sustainable relationships with Indigenous scholars also necessitate a commitment to ongoing reflexivity in research practices. Knowledge exchange must be approached with a framework that prioritizes ethical engagement and respect for Indigenous sovereignty. This requires settler scholars to examine their research questions, methodologies, and intended outcomes critically, ensuring they align with the community-defined aspirations of Indigenous partners (Weir et al., 2024). By honoring the political and legal status of Indigenous communities, scholars can shift their epistemological frameworks to engage fully with Indigenous knowledges on their own terms. Furthermore, the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Holders Councils within academic governance structures serves as a vital mechanism for ensuring that Indigenous perspectives are not only included but embedded in institutional policies (McCagg-Nystrom, 2024). This comprehensive approach not only contributes to a higher standard of academic integrity but also supports genuine partnerships founded on trust, equity, and mutual respect.

10. CONCLUSION

In concluding this exploration of settler scholar positionality within the framework of equity and collaborative commitment, it becomes increasingly clear that transformative change in educational systems is not merely aspirational; it is an imperative. The entrenched systemic barriers influencing Indigenous students' educational outcomes, highlighted through various critical lenses, necessitate a profound re-evaluation of leadership practices. For instance, the application of Stroh's 4-stage change model within educational settings serves as a strategic mechanism to dismantle colonial mental models and to foster environments conducive to third-order changes, such as decolonization of leadership and curriculum (Barron, 2024). As educational leaders engage in reflective practices and appreciate the diverse experiences brought forth by co-creators of knowledge, they enhance their capacity for developing a shared vision that promotes equity and belonging in schools (Archer, 2024). Ultimately, this multifaceted approach underscores the moral imperative of prioritizing the needs of marginalized communities within educational discourse. Furthermore, the significance of cultivating a sense of belonging in educational environments cannot be overstated, particularly in relation to the academic achievement and psychological wellbeing of all students. Current findings illustrate a stark equity and belonging gap among secondary students, mandating that educational leaders integrate Indigenous and culturally sustaining pedagogies into their practices (Archer, 2024). By embracing a two-eyed change model that interweaves Indigenous principles with Western systems thinking, school leaders can effectively address the problem of practice associated with belonging and equity for diverse student populations. This approach not only acknowledges the prevailing Eurocentric narratives within educational institutions but actively seeks to displace them by facilitating authentic relationships and community engagement. The commitment to decolonizing educational practices offers an opportunity to reshape systems in a manner that genuinely reflects the values and aspirations of all community members (Johnson & Endres, 2021). Finally, the complexities surrounding climate justice, particularly within settler colonial contexts, necessitate a critical examination of the underlying power dynamics and narratives that inform these discussions. As articulated through various research initiatives, the intersections of colonialism, capitalism, and social justice must be carefully navigated to avoid perpetuating the very injustices that climate action seeks to redress (Trimble, 2024). The analysis of changing narratives within the settler philanthropy sector reveals persistent colonial durability that camouflage the ongoing impacts of colonial violence, thereby complicating genuine commitments to reconciliation (Trimble, 2024). As scholars and practitioners engage in collaborative and participatory frameworks to address these issues, they must prioritize the lived experiences of marginalized communities and foster relational practices that promote a more equitable future. The path forward requires vigilance, reflexivity, and a steadfast commitment to dismantling oppressive structures, ensuring that no community remains left in the dust.

10.1 Summary of Key Points Discussed

The exploration of settler scholar positionality is a critical juncture in understanding the overarching dynamics of equity and collaborative commitment in educational contexts. It necessitates a close examination of how systemic barriers perpetuate inequitable outcomes, especially concerning Indigenous students' educational experiences. By employing frameworks like critical theory, as evidenced in various scholarly works, one can dissect the implications of settler colonialism on educational leadership and policy. For instance, the disparities faced by Indigenous students in Alberta, as reported, stem from historical and contemporary leadership practices that uphold deficit thinking and unconscious biases (Barron, 2024). This position urges a transformative approach, advocating for reflexivity and dialogic practices among educational leaders. Such a focus not only promotes critical consciousness among these leaders but also sets the groundwork for system-wide changes that should strive for tangible equity and inclusion across the educational spectrum. Further highlighting the necessity of collaborative frameworks, the discourse surrounding knowledge exchange reveals profound implications within the realm of educational reform. Grounded in principles of shared knowledge creation and the redistribution of power, engaging with Indigenous perspectives necessitates a structural rethinking of how educational bodies operate. The reframing of Indigenous peoples as political-legal entities, as highlighted in current dialogues, serves to counter traditional narratives that often marginalize their voices (Weir et al., 2024). This shift requires embracing Indigenous epistemologies in a meaningful way, thus facilitating a more equitable approach to knowledge generation and application in educational settings. In essence, the incorporation of these diverse perspectives not only enriches the academic fabric but also fosters an environment conducive to genuine collaboration, where all stakeholders can navigate the complexities of educational equity and inclusion. Lastly, the analysis of philanthropic narratives within settler contexts underscores the inherent dissonance in reconciling traditional philanthropic approaches with the pressing need for decolonial practices. The critical investigation of the reconciliation change narrative, particularly within Canadian settler philanthropy, elucidates how these frameworks can simultaneously perpetuate and resist colonial legacies (Trimble, 2024). By examining texts produced by philanthropic organizations, one can identify pervasive themes that either mask ongoing colonial violence or propose alternative trajectories aimed at reparations and relational advancements. This duality highlights the complexity of integrating equity into philanthropic practices, suggesting that merely engaging in reconciliatory rhetoric is insufficient. Instead, transformative practices grounded in mutual recognition and the prioritization of Indigenous knowledge must be at the forefront to achieve meaningful equity in educational and philanthropic interventions (Trimble, 2024). Consequently, the synthesis of these insights will serve as a robust foundation for future research and practice in fostering a decolonized educational landscape (Rudolph, et al, 2024).

10.2 Call to Action for Settler Scholars in Fostering Equity and Collaboration

In the context of settler scholars, the call to action for fostering equity and collaboration necessitates a profound re-evaluation of existing scholarly practices and positionality. Settler scholars must actively engage in decolonial methodologies (Omodan, 2025) that confront and dismantle the systemic inequities perpetuated by traditional academic frameworks. This involves the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge systems and community-driven research paradigms that not only acknowledge but also prioritize the voices and experiences of marginalized communities. As noted in contemporary scholarship, the silence surrounding pressing issues, such as the ongoing genocide in Palestine, exemplifies a troubling trend of complicity among scholars who fail to address colonial violence, thereby undermining their commitment to equity (Shoman et al., 2025; Davis, 2020). Embracing a collaborative ethos is essential; it requires intentional efforts to build partnerships that value mutual respect, shared leadership, and the radical decentering of dominant narratives within research agendas. To effectively promote equity, settler scholars must actively support the development of frameworks that are centered on community engagement and social justice. Teacher educators, for instance, are called to facilitate learning environments that bolster pre-service teachers' abilities to advocate for justice in their future practices. Essential practices include fostering self-awareness, bridging connections with community, cultivating equitable communication, and subverting existing structures of oppression (Weiler et al., 2025). These strategies create a foundation for sustained engagement in equity-oriented actions beyond

formal education contexts. Consequently, settler scholars must prioritize the development of pedagogical strategies that emphasize critical consciousness, enabling both scholars and practitioners to engage deeply with the implications of their positionality in educational and research settings. Elevating marginalized voices within these discourses not only cultivates a more inclusive environment but also strengthens the call for collaborative commitment to equity across various academic disciplines. The urgency of developing critical leadership frameworks becomes evident when considering the transformative potential of youth engagement, particularly in the Latinx community. Settler scholars are encouraged to initiate conversations that recognize Latinx youth as essential leaders and advocates for equity, thereby prompting the exploration of culturally responsive leadership frameworks (Guzman, 2024). These frameworks can act as strategic blueprints that empower youth to navigate and confront systemic inequalities, supporting their development as critical thinkers and community leaders. By integrating principles that honor diverse cultural experiences into scholarly dialogues, settler scholars can both enrich their research and contribute to social equity. This commitment to fostering a collaborative spirit extends beyond mere acknowledgment of diversity; it demands active participation in the creation of inclusive frameworks that resonate with the lived experiences and aspirations of all community members, heralding a shared commitment to liberatory futures for both marginalized and settler individuals alike (Mad Plume, 2024).

11. REFERENCES

Ananya, R., Terra, G., & Powers, A. (2025). Insurgent Ground: Land, Housing, Property. E-Scholarship, University of California, USA. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6mf8k3zg

Andress, L., Hall, T., Davis, S., Levine, J., Cripps, K., & Guinn, D. (2020). *Addressing power dynamics in community-engaged research partnerships*. Journal of Patient-Reported Outcomes, 4(1), Article 24. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41687-020-00191-z SpringerLink

Antifaeff, P. (2024). Transforming Hearts and Minds: Racial Equity Through Human Resources Policies and Practices. The Organizational Improvement Plan at Western University, 400. Doctoral thesis, Western University. Retrieved from: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/oip/400

Archer, B. M. L. (2024). *Weaving New Stories: Decolonizing and Transforming Secondary Schools for Equity, Belonging, and Learning.* Doctoral thesis, Western University. Retrieved from: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/oip/440

Avramovic, L. (2024). The Heart of School Leadership: Supporting the Health & Well-being of Teachers in the Face of Occupational Pressures. Doctoral thesis, Western University. Retrieved from: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/oip/409

Balasco, L., Garnsey, E., Kurze, A., & Lamont, C. K. (2024). *Justicecraft: Imagining Justice in Times of Conflict*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-58160-1

Barron, P. F. (2024). When good intentions aren't good enough: Dismantling colonial praxis in educational leadership. Doctoral thesis, Western University. Retrieved from: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/oip/397/

Belarde-Lewis, M., Littletree, S., Braine, I. S., Srader, K., Guerrero, N., & Palmer, C. L. (2024). Centering Relationality and CARE for Stewardship of Indigenous Research Data. *Data Science Journal*, *23*(32), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.5334/dsj-2024-032

Bell, M., & Lewis, N. (2023). Universities claim to value community-engaged scholarship: So why do they discourage it? *Public Understanding of Science*, *32*(6): 645–659. https://doi.org/10.1177/09636625221118779

Bennett, C., Fitzpatrick-Harnish, K., & Talbot, B. (2022). Collaborative untangling of positionality, ownership, and answerability as white researchers in indigenous spaces. *International Journal of Music Education*, *40*(4), 628-641. https://doi.org/10.1177/02557614221087343

Beresford-Dey, M. (2025). Educational Leadership: Enabling Positive Planetary Action Through Regenerative Practices and Complexity Leadership Theory. *Challenges*, *16*(3), 32. https://doi.org/10.3390/challe16030032

Blaschke, L. M. (2012). Heutagogy and lifelong learning: A review of heutagogical practice and self-determined learning. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, *13*(1), 56–71. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v13i1.1076

Butin, D. W. (2007). Focusing our aim: Strengthening faculty commitment to community engagement. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *39*(6), 34-39. Retrieved from: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ780402

Canning, N. (2010). *Playing with heutagogy: Exploring strategies to empower mature learners in higher education. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 34*(1), 59–71. https://doi.org/10.1080/03098770903477102

ChatGPT. (2025). *Compiled references from literature search results* (Version 5.1) [Large language model output]. Retrieved from web-based scholarly databases, publishers, institutional repositories, and open-access archives

Comunidad, E. (2024). ¿ *Dónde Vive la Ciencia en su Comunidad?:* How a Community Is Using Photovoice to Reclaim Local Green Spaces. *Social Sciences*, *14*(1), 1-36

Constant-Inglis, H. (2023). Archaeological Interpretive Design for Wanuskewin Heritage Park from the Indigenous Perspective: astam api: Stories of Indigenous Archaeology. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, Canada

Cueva, A. R. B., Giri, K., Caitlin, H., & Shepherd, L. J. (2024). A decolonial feminist politics of fieldwork: centering community, reflexivity, and loving accountability. *International Studies Review*, 26(1), viae003. https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viae003

Cutter, S. L., Barnes, L., Berry, M., Burton, C., Evans, E., Tate, E., & Webb, J. (2008). A place-based model for understanding community resilience to natural disasters. *Global Environmental Change*, *18*(4), 598-606. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2008.07.013

Daly, K., & Kelly, L. (2024). Indigenous Nurse and White Settler Nurse Teaching Teams: Learning to Disrupt with Indigenist Nursing Education. *Quality Advancement in Nursing Education - Avancées en formation infirmière*, https://doi.org/10.17483/2368-6669.1433

Danvers, E. (2019). Individualised and instrumentalised? critical thinking, students and the optics of possibility within neoliberal higher education. *Critical Studies in Education*, *62*(5), 641-656. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2019.1592003

Datta, R. (2013). A relational theoretical framework and meanings of land, nature, and sustainability for research with Indigenous communities. *Local Environment*, *20*(1), 102-113. https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2013.818957

Davis, C. (2020). How Canadian public schools undermine indigenous humanity: Educational administration and ongoing colonialism. Doctoral dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, Canada. Retrieved from: https://harvest.usask.ca/items/8b0b5626-bf48-4825-ba4d-10cb198f7972

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (3rd ed.). New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479851393.001.0001

Fine, M. (2007). Witnessing with an agenda. In, *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 251-280). Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks. Retrieved from: https://archive.org/details/sagehandbookofqu0000unse__03ed?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Fisk, J. M., Leong, K., M., Berl, R. E. W., Long, J. W., Landon, A. C., Adams, M. M., Hankins, D. L., William, C. K., Lake, F. K., & Salerno, J. (2024). Evolving wildlife management cultures of governance through Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. *Journal of Wildlife Management*, *88*(6), e22584. https://doi.org/10.1002/jwmg.22584

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum. Gabriel, L. M. (2025). Curricular Reconciliation: Equitable, Inclusive, and accessible approaches to professional writing through coalition-led technical communication. PhD Dissertations, University of Syracuse - ALL. 2137. Retrieved from: https://surface.syr.edu/etd/2137

Guzman, G. (2024). A Call for Afro & Indigenous Latinx Liberation! A Guidebook Re-Envisioning Critical Latinx Leadership Principles. Master's Projects and Capstones, University of San Francisco, 1744. Retrieved from: https://repository.usfca.edu/capstone/1744

Hase, S., & Kenyon, C. (2000). From andragogy to heutagogy: A review of self-determined learning. Southern Cross University. Retrieved from: https://researchportal.scu.edu.au/esploro/outputs/journalArticle/From-andragogy-to-heutagogy/991012821597602368?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Henry, A. P. (2024). Narratives That Perpetuate, Narratives That Disrupt, and Narratives That Heal: One Teacher's Exploration of Decoloniality. Dissertation, Antioch University. Retrieved from: https://aura.antioch.edu/etds/1003

Homan, E. (2025). Kill'em with Kindness: Midwest Nice as a Mechanism of Whiteness. *Education Sciences*, *15*(2). https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15020145

Isaac, G., Burgio-Ericson, K., McChesney, L., Green, A. G., Charley, K. K., Church, K., & Dillard, R. W. (2024). Making kin is more than metaphor: Implications of responsibilities toward Indigenous knowledge and artistic traditions for museums. Museum Anthropology, 48(1), e12283. https://doi.org/10.1111/muan.12283

Islam, M. R. (2025). Ethics in Social Science Research: Challenges and Future Directions. In, *Ethics in Social Science Research: Current Insights and Practical Strategies* (pp. 243-263). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-9881-0_19

Jeung, D. Y., Kim, C., & Chang, S. J. (2018). Emotional labor and burnout: A review of the literature. *Yonsei Medical Journal, 59*(2), 187–193. https://doi.org/10.3349/ymj.2018.59.2.187

Jewell, E., & Mosby, I. (Eds.). (2022). *Calls to action accountability: A 2022 status update on reconciliation*. Yellowhead Institute. Retrieved from: https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/TRC-Report-12.15.2022-Yellowhead-Institute-min.pdf

John, D. R., Davis, C., Locker, V., Shwan, D. (2024). Colonial Genocide in Intercultural and Interdisciplinary Perspective / Génocide colonial dans une perspective interculturelle et interdisciplinaire. *Reports*. 1. Nathanson Centre on Transnational Human Rights, York, Canada. Retrieved from: https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/nathanson_reports/1

Johnson, T. N. and Endres, D. (2021). Decolonizing settler public address: the role of settler scholars. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs,* 24(1-2), 333-348. https://doi.org/10.14321/rhetpublaffa.24.1-2.0333

Johnson, T. N., & Endres, D. (2021). Decolonizing settler public address: The role of settler scholars. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, *24*(1-2), 333-348. https://doi.org/10.14321/rhetpublaffa.24.1-2.0333

Jopling, M., Stewart, G. T., Orchard, S., Suoranta, J., Tolbert, S., Cheilan, L., Yan, F., Price, C., Hayes, S., Scott, H., Latham, A., Bhatt, I., Dodonov, V., Matthews, A., Muhtaseb, R., MacKenzie, A., Owaineh, M., Earle, S., Simmons, B., Clarke, Z., & Jandrić, P. (2025). Postdigital citizen science and humanities: A theoretical kaleidoscope. *Postdigital Science and Education, 7*(1), 31–77. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-024-00481-5

King, J. (2023). Indigeneity, positionality, and ethical space: Navigating the in-between of Indigenous and settler academic discourse. *Papers on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching, 6*, 36–48. https://doi.org/10.55016/ojs/pplt.v6Y2023.75860

León, K (2025). Ethnic Studies for Secondary Schooling: Collaborative Curricular Insights from a Working Collective. PhD Dissertation, University of San Diego. https://doi.org/10.22371/05.2025.013

Leonardo, Z., Singh, M. V., & Noguera, Z. D. (2023). Education and colonialism: Three frameworks. In, *Handbook of Critical Education Research* (pp. 103-121). Routledge, London. Retrieved from: https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781000882148_A47006340/preview-9781000882148_A47006340.pdf

Lukens, A. (2013). Theorizing food justice: Critical positionality and the political economy of community food systems. Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawai'i at Manoa. Reteived from: http://hdl.handle.net/10125/100619

Machado-Escudero, Y., Gilliam, C. C., & Prussia, L. (2025). Righting relationships: Reclaiming places, spaces, and lifeways. *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work*, *10*, 227–239. Retrieved from: https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-024-00363-7

Macoun, A., & Strakosch, E. (2013). The ethical demands of settler colonial theory. *Settler Colonial Studies*, *3*(3-4), 426-443. https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2013.810695

Mad Plume, L. M. (2024). Applied Indigenous Knowledge Translation: Naatookyookaasii. Theses and Dissertations, University of North Dakota. Retrieved from: https://commons.und.edu/theses/6545

Mad Plume, L., Carroll, D., Nadeau, M., & Redvers, N. (2024). Measuring Wellness through Indigenous Partnerships: A Scoping Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *22*(1), 43. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph22010043

Maliha, J. M. (2024). There's a Camel in My Office" Nurturing Agents of Transformation: Equipping School Leaders to Combat Systemic Racism and Oppression and Foster Inclusive Communities. The Dissertation in Practice at Western University, 453. Retrieved from: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/oip/453

Manglicmot, J.S. (2025) Constructing Portraits of Elementary Teachers of Ethnic Studies: Examining the Narratives of Anti-Racist Educators in an Era of Common Core Curriculum and Instruction. https://doi.org/10.22371/05.2025.022

Mannergren, J., Björkdahl, A., Buckley-Zistel, S., Kappler, S., & Williams, T. (2024). *Peace and the politics of memory*. Manchester University Press, Manchester. Retrieved from: https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/98525/9781526178329.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

McCagg-Nystrom, H. (2024). The Integration of the Indigenous Knowledge Holders Council into a Post-Secondary Education Tri-Cameral Governance Institution. *The Dissertation in Practice at Western University, 450*. Retrieved from: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/oip/450/

McCubbin, L. L. D., & Moniz, J. (2014). Ethical principles in resilience research: Respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility. In, Theron, L., Liebenberg, L., Ungar, M. (eds), *Youth Resilience and Culture. Cross-Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology*, vol 11. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9415-2_16

Miller, M. (2024). From Bureaucracy to Belonging: An Equity-Oriented Cultural Shift in Preservice Teacher Placements. The Dissertation in Practice at Western University, 403. Retrieved from: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/oip/403

Molla, T. (2024). Engaged scholarship: paradigmatic and pragmatic drivers. *International Review of Sociology*, *34*(3), 488-511. https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.2024.2404914

Molla, T. (2025). Engaged scholarship and its discontents. *Social Inclusion*, *13*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.9124

Molla, T. (2025). Engaged scholarship and its discontents. *Social Inclusion*, 13. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.9124

Morales, M. P. E. (2016). Participatory action research (PAR) cum action research (AR) in teacher professional development: a literature review. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science*, *2*(1), 156-165. Retrieved from: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1105165

Nieminen, J. H., & Pesonen, H. V. (2022). Anti-ableist pedagogies in higher education: A systems approach. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, *19*(4), 1-15. Retrieved from: https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/informit.T202412120001900134266297 7

Omodan, B. I. (2025). The roles of epistemology and decoloniality in addressing power dynamics in university education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, *23*(5), 1226–1240. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2024.2335661

OpenAI (2025a). *Commitment to reflexivity and anti-oppressive practice: Pathways to enriched understanding and systemic change* [Digital infographic]. Generated with DALL·E via ChatGPT

OpenAI (2025b). Dismantling hegemonic structures enables the incorporation of Indigenous worldviews, settler scholar allyship, and authentic relationships, converging to produce equitable education grounded in recognition of diverse epistemologies. *ChatGPT* (Aug 12 version) [Large language model]

OpenAI (2025c). From dust we came, and to dust we shall return (Genesis 3:19). Illustration integrates principles of humility and shared origin, responsibility and reciprocity, and temporal perspective and accountability. *ChatGPT* (Aug 12 version) [Large language model]

Orcherton, D. F (2023a). Bridging Cultures in Distance Education: A Confluence of Critical Pedagogy of Place and Indigenous Education Philosophy (Case-Study Reference in Fiji and Vanuatu). *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology (IJISRT),* (7)176. Retrieved from: https://ijisrt.com/bridging-cultures-in-distance-education-a-confluence-of-critical-pedagogy-of-place-and-indigenous-education-philosophy-casestudy-reference-in-fiji-and-vanuatu

Orcherton, D. F (2023b). Reconciling the Dual Worldviews of Ancient Wisdom and Modernity: Collaborative-Learning Implications for Future Discourse. *Journal of Environmental Law & Policy, 03*(02), 55-82. https://doi.org/10.33002/jelp03.02.03

Orr, A. (2017). An Introduction to Eco-theology*:* Eco-Congregation Ireland. Retrieved from: https://www.ecocongregationireland.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/An-Introduction-to-Eco-Theology-by-Rev-Andrew-Orr.pdf

osas, L. G., Dharmar, M., Norris, K., Tiscareño, L., & Padilla, J. (2024). Engaging stakeholders to strengthen support for community-engaged research at Stanford School of Medicine. *Journal of Clinical and Translational Science, 8*(1), e3. https://dx.doi.org/10.1017/cts.2025.8

Pelican, M., Zafer, K., & Bollig, M. (Eds.) (2025). Decolonising the Future Academy in Africa and Beyond: Institutional Development and Collaboration (Postcolonial Studies, 54). Retrieved from: https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/99292

Pewewardy, C., & Lees, A. (Eds.) (2022). *Unsettling settler-colonial education: The transformational Indigenous praxis model*. Teachers College Press. Retrieved from: https://www.tcpress.com/unsettling-settler-colonial-education-9780807766804

Phillips, P. (2025). The Transeunt Listener: Towards Futurities of Re-learning in Truth and Reconciliation Curriculum and Teacher Education. *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies (JCACS) / La Revue de l'association canadienne pour l'étude du curriculum (RACÉC), 21*(2).https://doi.org/10.25071/1916-4467.40810

Pollack, J. R. (2024). *From Neoliberal Turnaround Toward Liberatory Cultivation: Countering Color-Evasive School Reforms Through Equitable Partnerships for Educational Justice*. The University of Wisconsin-Madison. Retrieved from: https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/DC5QU34RZPHTK8I

Potocki, E (2025). Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Environmental Education: Creating Culturally Responsive Curriculum to Foster a More Inclusive and Holistic Approach to Science Learning. Hamline University, School of Education and Leadership Student Capstone Projects. Retrieved from: https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_cp/1102/

Reid, A. J., Eckert, L., Lane, J., Young, N., Hinch, S. G., Darimont, C. T., Cooke, S. J., Ban, N. C., & Marshall, A. W. (2020). Two-Eyed Seeing": An Indigenous framework to transform fisheries research and management. *Fish and Fisheries*, *22*(2), 243-261. https://doi.org/10.1111/faf.12516

Renner, M. V. (2025). Arroyo Seco Placekeepers: The Use of Dramaturgy to Cultivate Creative Placekeeping and Community Networks in Pasadena, California. Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Davis. Retrieved from: https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8p32h7v6

Ricco, C. (2024). Principal Leadership from a Settler Canadian's Perspective. The Organizational Improvement Plan at Western University, 417. Retrieved from: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/oip/417

Rudolph, S; Mayes, Eve; Mekonnen, Tebeje Molla; Chiew, S; Abhayawickrama, N; Maiava, N; et al. (2024). What's the use of educational research? Six stories reflecting on research use with communities. Deakin University. Journal contribution. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-024-00693-5

Sahoo, S. (2025). Critical Pedagogy Empowers Students Through Transformative Education. *Journal Publication of International Research for Engineering and Management (JOIREM)*, *5*(06). Retrieved from: https://joirem.com/papers/volume-03/issue-6/critical-pedagogy-empowers-students-through-transformative-education/

Secules, S., McCall, C., Mejia, J. A., Beebe, C., Masters, A. S., Sánchez-Peña, M. L., & Svyantek, M. (2021). Positionality practices and dimensions of impact on equity research: A collaborative inquiry and call to the community. *Journal of Engineering Education, 110*(1), 19–43. https://doi.org/10.1002/jee.20377

Shackeroff, J. M., & Campbell, L. M. (2007). Traditional ecological knowledge in conservation research: problems and prospects for their constructive engagement. *Conservation and Society*, *5*(3), 343-360. Retrieved from: https://journals.lww.com/coas/fulltext/2007/05030/traditional_ecological_knowledge_in_conservation.6.aspx

Shaw, R. M., Howe, J., Beazer, J., & Carr, T. (2019). Ethics and positionality in qualitative research with vulnerable and marginal groups. *Qualitative Research*, *20*(3), 277-293. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794119841839

Shoman, H., Ajour, A., Ababneh, S., Jabiri, A., Pratt, N., Repo, J., & Aldossari, M. (2025). Feminist Silences in the Face of Israel's Genocide Against the Palestinian People: A Call for Decolonial Praxis Against Complicity. *Gender, Work & Organization, 32*(4), 1668-1675. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13258

Sims, D. A. (2023). Reimaging reflexivity through a critical theoretical framework: Autoethnographic narratives on becoming a (de) colonised researcher. *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning*, *11*(1), 120-138. Retrieved from: https://www.ajol.info/index.php/cristal/article/view/255708

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). Zed Books. Reteived from: https://bibliographies.bib.umontreal.ca/BaDHACAM/bibliography/VJH4BDRZ

St. Denis, V. (2011). Silencing Aboriginal Curricular Content and Perspectives Through Multiculturalism: "There Are Other Children Here. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, *33*(4), 306–317. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714413.2011.597638

Symons, D., & Blannin, J. (2019). Empowerment and disempowerment in peer observation within pre-service teacher, technology assisted integrated STEM education. In, A. Tatnall (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Education and Information Technologies* (1st ed.). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-60013-0_178-1

Tarisayi, K. S. (2023). Autoethnography as a qualitative methodology: Conceptual foundations, techniques, benefits and limitations. *Encyclopaideia,* 27(67). https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1825-8670/17815

Trimble, S. (2024). Canadian settler philanthropy and reconciliation: A critical textual analysis. Doctoral dissertation, University of Kent, School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, Division for the Study of Law, Society and Social Justice. https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent%2F01.02.107523

Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(3), 409-428. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.3.n0016675661t3n15

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *1*(1), 1–40. Retrieved from: https://ikdll.nau.edu/id/eprint/84/

Umamageswari, G., & Bagyalakshmi, C. (2023). Equitable learning environments: Advancing professional growth for inclusive classrooms. *Shanlax International Journal of Arts Science and Humanities*, *11*(S1-Nov), 10-16. https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v11is1-nov.6853

Vander Kloet, M. A. (2025). Taking time and planting seeds: learning, relationships and equity work in academic development. *Critical Studies in Education*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2025.2521532

Vang, M. H. (2024). Activist Scholars: Faculty of Color Navigating Institutional Rewards and Punishments. PhD Thesis, University of Massachusetts, Boston. Retrieved from: https://scholarworks.umb.edu/doctoral_dissertations/966

Viswanathan, M., Ammerman, A., Eng, E., Garlehner, G., Lohr, K. N., Griffith, D., Rhodes, S., Samuel-Hodge, C., Maty, S., Lux, L., Webb, L., Sutton, S. F., Swinson, T., Jackman, A. & & Whitener, L. (2004). Community-based participatory research: Assessing the evidence: Summary. *AHRQ evidence report summaries*. Retrieved from: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/books/NBK11852/

Watkins, S., Dewar, B., & Kennedy, C. (2016). Appreciative Inquiry as an intervention to change nursing practice in in-patient settings: An integrative review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, *60*, 179-190. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2016.04.017

Watson, K., & Jeppesen, S. (2021). Settler fragility: four paradoxes of decolonizing research. *Revista de Comunicação Dialógica*, (4), 78-109. https://doi.org/10.12957/rcd.2020.55392

Weiler, C., Brinegar, K., DeMink-Carthew, J., & Smith, K. (2025). Scaffolding Subversion: Preparing Pre-Service Teachers to Sustain Justice-Oriented Action. *Inquiry in Education, 17*(1), 6. Retrieved from: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1475950

Weir, J. K., Morgain, R., Moon, K., & Moggridge, B. J. (2024). Centring Indigenous peoples in knowledge exchange research-practice by resetting assumptions, relationships and institutions. *Sustainability Science, 19*, 629–645. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-023-01457-3

Weuffen, S. (2024). Positionality: The foundational threshold concept for decolonising practices. In, *Decolonising Australian History Education* (pp. 69-86). Routledge, London. Retrieved from: https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003435617-5/positionality-sara-weuffen

Wrigley, K. A. (2024). *Care-full climate justice organising: Movement-based participatory Action Research on Noongar Boodja*. Edith Cowan University. https://doi.org/10.25958/t8pt-9v21

Yee, J. Y., Hackbusch, C., & Wong, H. (2013). An anti-oppression (ao) framework for child welfare in Ontario, Canada: possibilities for systemic change. *British Journal of Social Work*, *45*(2), 474-492. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bct141

AUTHOR'S DECLARATIONS AND ESSENTIAL ETHICAL COMPLIANCES

Author's Contributions (in accordance with ICMJE criteria for authorship)
This article is 100% contributed by the sole author. He conceived and designed the research or analysis, collected the data, contributed to data analysis & interpretation, wrote the article, performed critical revision of the article/paper, edited the article, and supervised and administered the field work.

Funding
No funding was available for the research conducted for and writing of this paper. Therefore, acknowledging any support agency is not applicable in case of this research or the written work. However, informal support of institutional supervisors, colleagues and respondents is duly acknowledged.

Research involving human bodies or organs or tissues (Helsinki Declaration)
The author(s) solemnly declare(s) that this research has not involved any human subject (body or organs) for experimentation. It was not a clinical research. The contexts of human population/participation were only indirectly covered through literature review. Therefore, an Ethical Clearance (from a Committee or Authority) or ethical obligation of Helsinki Declaration does not apply in cases of this study or written work.

Research involving animals (ARRIVE Checklist)
The author(s) solemnly declare(s) that this research has not involved any animal subject (body or organs) for experimentation. The research was not based on laboratory experiment involving any kind of animal. Some contexts of animals are also indirectly covered through literature review. Therefore, an Ethical Clearance (from a Committee or Authority) does not apply in cases of this study or written work.

Research on Indigenous Peoples and/or Traditional Knowledge
The author(s) solemnly declare(s) that this research has not involved Indigenous Peoples as participants or respondents, with the documentation of their Indigenous Knowledge. Some other contexts, if any, of Indigenous Peoples or Indigenous Knowledge are only indirectly covered through literature review. An Ethical Clearance 'to conduct research on indigenous peoples' Indigenous knowledge is also not relevant. Therefore, an Ethical Clearance (from a Committee or Authority) or prior informed consent (PIC) of the respondents or Self-Declaration in this regard does not apply in cases of this study or written work.

Research involving Plants
The author(s) solemnly declare(s) that this research has not involved the plants for experiment or field studies. The contexts of plants were only indirectly covered through literature review. Thus, during this research the author(s) obeyed the principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on the Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

(Optional) Research Involving Local Community Participants (Non-Indigenous)
The author(s) solemnly declare(s) that this research has not involved local community participants or respondents belonging to non-Indigenous peoples. This study did not involve any child in any form directly. The contexts of different humans, people, populations, men/women/children and ethnic people are also indirectly covered through literature review. Therefore, an Ethical Clearance (from a Committee or Authority) and prior informed consent (PIC) of the respondents in this regard are NOT appended.

(Optional) PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses)
The author(s) has/have NOT complied with PRISMA standards. It is not relevant in case of this study or written work.

Competing Interests/Conflict of Interest
Author(s) has/have no competing financial, professional, or personal interests from other parties or in publishing this manuscript. There is no conflict of interest with the publisher or the editorial team or the reviewers.

Attribution and Representation

All opinions and mistakes are the author(s)' own and cannot be attributed to the institutions they represent. The publisher is also not responsible either for such opinions and mistakes in the text or graphs or images.

Declaration of the Use of AI

During the preparation of this work, the authors used AI to assists the script translation, language editing, grammar correction, reference management, improving readability and proof reading. The author(s) declared that the use of AI has not compromised originality, leading to plagiarism, or violating data privacy and copyright. Author(s) is/are responsible that AI use complies with ethical standards of research and publication. It is also declared that AI-generated content fabricating data, references or findings is strictly avoided and not included. Author(s) adhered the AI's upper usage limit of 15% as fixed by the journal.

RIGHTS AND PERMISSIONS

Open Access. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third-party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

***

To see original copy of these declarations signed by Corresponding/First Author (on behalf of other co-authors too), please download associated zip folder [Ethical Declarations] from the published Abstract page accessible through and linked with the DOI: https://doi.org/10.33002/jpg050202.